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# ST. TERESA'S BOOK - MARK

Let nothing trouble thee,  
Let nothing affright thee.  
All things are passing;  
Only God is changeless.  
Patience gains all things.  
Who hath God, wanteth nothing.  
God alone sufficeth.

## A Meditative Commentary

FROM THE SPANISH OF  
THE VERY REVEREND LUKE OF ST. JOSEPH  
ASSISTANT GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF THE  
DISCALCED CARMELITES, ROME

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## Introduction

OUR Holy Mother St. Teresa was a remarkable poet because she was a great Saint. All the Saints are poets, although not all have left us written in rhythmic cadences the ardent sentiments of their deified souls.

The foundation of poetry is truth, its distinctive trait is sentiment; its attractive gala apparel is lent to it by the imagination. He was not entirely wrong who defined poetry: *as the language of passion and of an ardent imagination*. (Blair's Lessons in Rhetoric and Fine Arts, XXXIV.)

An inspiration suddenly surprising one's spirit, envelops it in a nimbus of light and moves it deeply. Behold the soul of poetry! At its light all the faculties of the soul awaken, and the warmth that they irradiate communicates itself to the fancy, the heart, perhaps to the very senses; and thus, all the vital forces concentrating on the object that

## *Introduction*

awakened them, the spirit sings or weeps, that is, feels itself a poet.

Truth is to souls what the sun is to creation. Its light is always the same, but its effects are very different and even opposite, according to the point upon which this light is projected. If the luminous rays fall upon a quagmire, they cause germs to develop and with them poison the air we breathe. When inspiration alights upon an ignoble soul, it also becomes very dangerous, for the powers aroused within are placed at the disposal of an evil purpose; and there is nothing more dangerous than perverted genius. With the germs their light has caused to spring from the dregs of the heart or the mire of the senses, they poison the moral atmosphere and may envenom numberless souls.

But when these same rays of light fall upon some well disposed ground that carefully conserves the seeds of plants and flowers, at their heat these quickly open and send forth their tender shoots, form buds,

## *Introduction*

and flowers and fruits; thus beautifying, perfuming and enriching creation, and even the little innocent birds proclaim with joyous warbles and sweet melodies the sun's light as it appears with the first scintillations of the dawn. The birds and flowers are the poets of the irrational world, as they answer to its moods and sing when bathed in warmth and light.

The light of truth, resting upon an innocent soul and pure heart, excites them sweetly. Powers until then latent awaken with great sprightliness and vigor. The mind is able to see more clearly, whilst the heart feels with greater delicacy and harmony. The fancy finds graces and beauties until then unknown to it. The passions and the senses become silenced or illumined by that new light of truth, placing themselves at the soul's disposal. The spirit imbibes all of man's energies and, concentrating them on one single object, soon overflows in poetical language. The poetical fire inspires and sweetens the soul which feels

## *Introduction*

interiorly the noble sentiment of all of its words. Man is then a poet, and he manifests it, whether in prose or verse. Poetry is a flame that illumines the mind, inflames the heart and enriches the fancy. It is more difficult to conceal it when present than to feign it when it does not exist. The Saints are naturally poets. Being nearer to God and accustomed to the contemplation of infinite truth, they feel more generously its divine influence. Their hearts being so well predisposed towards God, and containing the supernatural seeds of the life of God within them, when through contemplation this heavenly light beams upon them, they feel deeply and sweetly touched; the peace and joy experienced in their souls are communicated to their words and actions. Therefore Saints are poets, even though they have not written in rhythmic cadences.

Poetry is necessary to the human spirit. Noble and sensitive souls become asphyxiated with the defilements of this artificial



## *Introduction*

world, and in a poetical atmosphere they can breathe with freedom. The Saints, already detached from earthly miseries, dwell more in heaven than on earth; living and walking with freedom, they sing of their joys, and weep for what yet remains of their dull captivity. One of Milton's biographers and critics has aptly said: "None can be a poet, or even take delight in poetry, without a certain amount of pain of spirit."

Profound sadness of soul is an almost essential condition for the inspiration of poetry. Truth, love, sadness, and we must add hope; these are essential to every true poet.

The Saints possessed these qualities in an eminent degree. They possessed truth because they sought it at its fountainhead, God; they loved tenderly because they were Saints; they felt sad because they considered themselves exiled from heaven; they leaned upon hope because they felt they were the sons of God.

\* \* \*

## *Introduction*

Our Holy Mother Saint Teresa of Jesus was thus familiar with the manner of intercourse with God; she, who figures in the first rank of the happy choir of the souls most loved by God; she, the Angel of purity, the Seraph of love and Cherub of celestial wisdom; the thrice adorned spouse, the chosen disciple and beloved daughter of Jesus, must needs be a poet, for it is not possible to be nearly always in conscious union with infinite Truth and not become rapt in the splendors of His divine light; to feel the constant presence of that infinite Beauty and not become sweetly captivated by it; to have a foretaste of the sweetness of that life above, and not experience a weariness and sadness, and feel a dislike for the things below—to feel one's self so tenderly caressed as a daughter of God and not to be filled with unshakable hope in His divine promises.

To be conscious of all this and not proclaim it, not sing of it in the most intimate effusions of the soul, were not possible to a

## *Introduction*

soul so grateful, a heart as ardent, noble and generous as hers.

Ah, yes! Our Holy Mother must needs be a poet, for she was a great Saint. And more than on account of her privileged talent, more than because of her incomparable genius, she should be a poet, because of her most pure and ardent heart. The love of God that inflamed it, and not its genius, must guide her pen and modulate her sweetest songs. But we will let the Saint instruct us herself. Speaking of the state of the soul when it has reached the third degree of prayer, she says:

“ ’Tis a slumber of the faculties, which neither lose themselves completely nor yet understand how they act. The joy, sweetness and delight experienced are, without comparison, greater than before; it gives the waters of grace to these lips and to this soul. This agony is enjoyed with unspeakable delight. Many words are now spoken in praise of God, without rhythm, if the Lord Himself does not lend them harmony;

## Introduction

the understanding, however, is of no worth here. Oh, my God! in what a state is the soul when it is thus; it would wish to be wholly transformed into tongues with which to praise Thee. *I know someone who without being a poet happened of a sudden to write very touching couplets* [there is no doubt but what this someone was the Saint herself], fitly proclaiming her sorrow, not composed by her understanding, but, in order the more to enjoy the ecstasy that caused her such sweet suffering, she would complain of it to her God." (Life, chap. XVI.)

Our Saint is always poetical, in her prose no less than in her verse. Certain it is that her most forceful poems do not contain greater inspiration or more ardent sentiments than her "Mansions of the Soul," or her incomparable "Exclamations." There is nothing that can so exalt the mind or fill it with greater tenderness than these words taken at random: "May God live and give me life; may He reign and I be captive,

## *Introduction*

for my soul desires no other freedom.”  
“How can he be free who finds himself estranged from the Highest Good? What greater or more miserable captivity than for the soul to be loosed from the hand of its Maker? Oh, life! thou enemy of my welfare, who but thee has the right to end thee; I suffer thee because God suffers thee, and I sustain thee because thou art His. O Life, be not treacherous or ungrateful to me! . . . Alas for me, O Lord, that my exile is so long; brief is time to be spent for Thy eternity, yet long is a single day or even hour for one who fears and knows not whether he is to offend Thee! O free will so enslaved to thy liberty if not nailed with the love and fear of Him who created thee! Oh when will that blessed day arrive which will find thee drowned in the infinite ocean of truth, where thou shalt be free to sin no longer, for thou shalt be safe from all misery, renaturalized with the life of thy God. . . . Forsake me not, O Lord. . . . Let



## *Introduction*

me serve Thee always and do with me what Thou wilt." (Exclamation XVI.)

As the Saint is a poet, not only on account of the divine love that inflamed her heart, but also because of the divine truth that so fully illumined her soul in contemplation and revealed to her infinite secrets—so is she in all her writings no less tender than profound. In any of her pages might be found material enough to unfold most beautiful idyls of tenderness and for highest meditations on the most sublime of moral and religious truths. She speaks always no more to the understanding than to the heart.

## Prologue

**I**N TIMES gone by, during days of trial and sadness, I sought (and found) solace for my spirit, and comfort for my soul, in meditation upon a celebrated poem of our Holy Mother. According to authentic tradition, the saintly Mother carried it as a book-mark in her Breviary, no doubt frequently to comfort her spirit by reading it. The editors of the magazine *Mount Carmel*, regarding with excessive indulgence our meditations, when we submitted them to their inspection, thought it well to publish them in a series of articles, which saw the light many years ago in that Review. Afterwards that Review, giving them an esteem which was certainly unmerited, collected and published them in a convenient edition, which was immediately exhausted. Many have asked me to republish them, with the assurance that numbers of afflicted souls will find comfort in their sor-

## *Prologue*

rows by reading my humble pages. From some I have received letters of commendation, although it may well be guessed, they were prompted by excessive kindness, leaving justice and truth a little in the background. At any rate, I am grateful and accept them as a stimulus.

May Divine Providence deign to make use once more of this, His humble instrument, in order to carry tiny drops of dew or little rays of heavenly light to other afflicted souls very dear to Him. The Heart of Jesus rejoices in consoling afflicted spirits, who by faith and hope are united to Him, and who weep, suffer—and invoke His aid. This is the loving way of a Father, and to second Him in such a work is the most worthy occupation of man. Happy he who with St. Paul can say, even in the salvation of a single soul: "We are the helpers and coadjutors of God" (I Cor. iii, 9). If our Lord deigns to make use of this little work, written under His gaze, the pen following the dictates of the heart,

## *Prologue*

in order to carry a little warmth or light to a single soul, the author's ambitions will be fully satisfied.

In order to make up in some way for the poverty of these pages, I have added at the end some of the renowned poems written by our beloved Holy Mother, as also her celestial counsels. I believe that the Saint's clients will be thankful to me for furnishing them in such a small manual, some of our great Doctor's most admirable conceptions. May she protect the least and last of her sons.

THE AUTHOR.

Barcelona, Christmas, 1912.





*St. Teresa's Book-Mark*



## Chapter 1

*Let nothing trouble thee,  
Let nothing affright thee.*

*The human heart, how large and yet how small....  
Creatures can do nothing against it.... Whatever happens  
is foreseen and pre-ordained, as well as  
permitted, by our Heavenly Father.*

THE SAINTS, those souls so dear to God, dwell in heights inaccessible to the majority of mortals. There, nearer to heaven, they breathe the very atmosphere of faith, of purity, of love and of filial confidence in the Divine Goodness. Our dearest Mother, the peerless Saint Teresa, our inspired Doctor and beloved Spouse of Jesus, in order to show us the peace and sweet abandonment in the arms of God, such as is enjoyed by souls who have reached heights such as these, composed this beautiful poem:

*Let nothing trouble thee,  
Let nothing affright thee.*

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

*All things are passing;  
Only God is changeless.  
Patience gains all things,  
Who hath God, wanteth nothing,  
God alone sufficeth.*

This is one of the sweetest and most sublime songs that has ever resounded in this vale of sighs and tears, a canticle supremely beautiful and profoundly wise; it combines the greatest theological truths, the most lofty thoughts of philosophy, and the sweetest delights of poetry. It is the language of an angelic mind, the song of a soul who feels like a poet, prays like a Christian and loves like a Saint; and who weeps, moans and sighs as one exiled from heaven.

*Let nothing trouble thee,  
Let nothing affright thee.*

Even though there rise up against thee, O my soul, the powers of earth and of darkness, the hatred of men and the fury of hell, whilst the insane passions of the multitudes

## *Let Nothing Trouble Thee*

clamor with rage, and kingdoms plot vengeance against thee, although thou feelest violently the agitation of the senses whose temptations cause the very innocence of thy heart to shudder in terror, yet

*Let nothing trouble thee,  
Let nothing affright thee;*

for thy will, although seemingly so frail, is omnipotent and invincible because nothing nor anyone can overpower it, if it does not wilfully allow itself to be conquered.

Although thou art the plaything of thy own heart, which at one time feels with sublimest melancholy of the majesty of heaven, and yet soon is smirched by the petty things of earth; which now on the wings of its fairy dreams seems to swing over the confines of time into eternity, and now in adversity dashes itself against the dull, hard rocks of sadness—

*Let nothing trouble thee,  
Let nothing affright thee;*

for God has been pleased to fashion the

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

human heart in a very singular and noble manner; so small that a tiny flower delights it and so large that only the infinite can fill it; so frail that a single word perplexes it and a smile of love captivates it, and so powerful that neither the angels of heaven with their wisdom, nor men with their cunning, nor the demons with their artfulness, can penetrate its sanctuary nor read its thoughts, nor change its inclinations, if it does not of itself freely consent. God alone knows the secret of its strength.

If the seas become violently agitated, enveloping with their great waves the utmost limits of the earth and raising against the very heavens the foam of their billows, filling the abyss with the roar of their turbulent commotions; if empires fall and kingdoms perish and the moral, religious and political world becomes wrapped in the violent whirlwind of human passions that seem to drag in their wake all that is most sacred on earth—the innocence of the upright heart, the sanctity of marriage and the

## *Let Nothing Trouble Thee*

hearth—and threaten even to destroy God's Holy Church and her sublime doctrine, yet

*Let nothing trouble thee,*

*Let nothing affright thee;*

for all that happens in heaven and upon earth, the mutations of the physical world as well as the disturbances of men's moral nature, the wreck of cities and the ruin of nations—all are foreseen by God, permitted or ordained by an all-wise Providence, Who knows how to direct all things to His greater honor and glory and the welfare of His chosen ones.

And if individuals and nations possessed by an insane giddiness rush blindly on towards the precipice, carried, as it were, on the wings of frightful fatalism, yet

*Let nothing trouble thee,*

*Let nothing affright thee;*

because men and nations are carried in the arms of a provident God, Who is all justice, love and wisdom. As God is love, He directs all to the welfare of His elect and to

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

show the splendor of His glory. As God is justice, He allows nations to be frequently bathed in blood so that they may be purified from their apostasies and rise afterwards rejuvenated and turn to the enjoyment of days full of peace and prosperity. As wisdom, God brings forth good from evil, from chaos and confusion order and harmony; He makes light to shine from darkness and from the depths of corruption He causes to spring forth great and heroic virtues.



## Chapter 2

*All things are passing;  
Only God is changeless.*

*Continual change of everything created....Man's  
apostasy....God's threat....Scripture  
texts....Divine immutability.*

*Let nothing trouble thee,  
Let nothing affright thee;*

because

*All things are passing;  
Only God is changeless.*

*A*LL things are passing here below; the world is a place of continual change.

Glory and ignominy, our sweetest joys, our deepest sorrows, all pass away hand in hand. Passing are the violent passions that vanish like smoke, as also the greatest virtues, which transfer themselves to heaven. Childhood passes with its joys, youth with its illusions, old age with

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

its sorrows, and even death with its gloomy shadows passes away. Childhood develops into youth, youth into old age and old age becomes eclipsed in death; and death changes into a glorious transformation of man, who from being terrestrial becomes celestial, from temporal becomes eternal.

In this world everything is changeable; nations change and cities change just as men change, because they and all else are carried away on the wings of time.

Here below, even the loftiest virtues are insecure, while the greatest falls are never hopeless. Samson, with all his strength, was vanquished; David, the saintly king, stained his hands with innocent blood; Solomon, with all his wisdom, committed the grossest and most detestable errors; Judas, the apostle, became a traitor, an apostate and a blasphemer against the Holy Ghost. Divine grace made of Manasses, the abominable, the zealous and penitent King of Judea; the famous sinner of Magdala God made the model for all mystical

## *Only God Is Changeless*

souls, and one of the hearts that have followed Jesus Christ with greatest intensity and purity of love; the first and foremost persecutor of Christians God made the Apostle of the Gentiles; Saint Augustine, heretical and dissolute, God made the greatest of the Fathers of the Church.

The angels who shone as the very stars of heaven, fell; and to take their places rise those who lay in sin's abomination. The wise stumble while the ignorant walk in paths of light. Here below everything is insecure; no one can be proclaimed a Saint nor stigmatized a reprobate; for man with all his defects or his virtues is more changeable than the winds. We have seen many fallen monarchs; kings without sceptre and without crown; poverty-stricken magnates; generals without a sword; lofty virtues dragging themselves through the mire; virgins without modesty; the wise grown stupid; priests who offered up the most sacred sacrifices with unclean hands; sin-

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

ners of the darkest guilt repentant and forgiven.

The lyre of poets is out of tune and harsh; the intelligence of philosophers grows stupid; inspiration vanishes and the eloquence of the rhetorician becomes childish chatter. Yea, even innocence itself tires of singing its canticles of love, because here, in time,

*All things are passing;*

and we too must pass away with time and its changes.

Sooner or later the poor man's hut and the palace of the magnate must crumble—as has happened to the pyramids of Egypt, the walls of Ninive and the temples of Memphis.

Nations pass away, together with their laws; "the tribes of earth *pass away* with their patriarchs, republics with their magistrates, monarchies with their kings and empires with their rulers" (Discourse of Donoso Cortes on the Bible), armies with

## *Only God Is Changeless*

their generals, science with its doctors and false religions with their pretentious worship.

All the grandeur of earth is like a tiny grain of sand which, swept by the wind from its shores, leaves no memory or trace of the place it once occupied.

Men who but yesterday strutted noisily through the world, dazzling with the splendor of their glory, today lie silent and forgotten in the dust.

Where now are the immense possessions of Asuerus, who from Susa dictated laws to the world, and enforced them at the edge of the swords of his generals?

What has become of Xerxes' vast possessions which covered whole provinces with their innumerable battalions? And of the empire of Alexander, who dragged the captive kings of nations tied to his triumphal chariot—what remains? And where is the fabulous wealth of Cræsus, the money king of antiquity? And the incomparable mon-

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

archy of Augustus, and the boundless ambitions of Pompey, and the hideous vices of Nero and Caligula? *All things are passing*; men with their glories and their ignominies; Babylon, the glory of nations (Isaiah xiii, 19); Carthage, the rival of Rome; Argos, the illustrious; Thebes, the city of a hundred gates and a thousand dominions; Corinth, the beautiful; Athens, the mother of arts and master of scholars; Rome, the conqueror; Jerusalem, the Holy City; Saguntum, the valiant, and Numantia, the invincible.

Man has no power to check the change of things. Of no avail to Ninive were her high walls, neither to Memphis her learned priests, nor to Sardis her world-famous opulence, nor to Tyre her irresistible fleets, with their skilful admirals; nor to Troy her legendary heroes; nor to Athens the learned scholars of her Areopagus; nor to Rome her invincible warriors and her proud Senate; nor to Jerusalem her august temple, nor her majestic high priests, nor her code

## Only God Is Changeless

of holy laws, nor her inspired prophets who foretold her misfortunes. The same holds true for modern nations, with the bayonets of their soldiers and the bombs of their artillery; the cunning of their diplomats, and the eloquence of their orators, and the wisdom of their statesmen. Great as our present-day arrogance and power may be, all *this* will pass away, as all that was before has passed away and all that is to come, urged onward by the impulse of a double force; that of time which changes all things, and that of divine justice which punishes with overwhelming calamities the sins of the nations.

Modern nations, *profunde peccaverunt*, have sinned deeply (Osee, IX, 9). In their official life they have flung a challenge in the face of God, or at any rate have bade Him sleep peacefully on the confines of eternity, for they can well do without Him. They have committed the sin of theft and sacrilege, and the majority of them personally are constantly guilty of hateful sins,

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

some even of the frightful sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. But God has pledged Himself on His word to scatter the ashes of those who forsake Him to follow man.

By the mouth of Isaias He said: "Cursed be the man who, withdrawing his heart from God, places his confidence in creatures." And Jesus smote human presumption with this terrible threat: "I am the corner stone; and 'whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder' " (Matthew xxi, 44). But if all created things pass away, the word of God which threatens is eternal, and it is clear. It will never fail or be given the lie. Man may doubt and even deny it in a moment of weakness and folly; but time, and especially eternity, will see it ratified. Today we are witnessing a spectacle of horror never equaled before. Man, withdrawing his heart from God, has placed his confidence in self, in his own right arm and in his prodigious inventions.



## Only God Is Changeless

Yet this is not so new in the world, at least as regards the spirit that animates it. The amazing fact is that man should have resolutely risen up against Jesus Christ, the true *Corner Stone*, Who has sustained during so many ages the spiritual and moral edifice of Europe. They do not want Him in society or in politics; in peace or in war; in the home or in the school. They have bade Him go, they have told Him that they do not need Him. They have fallen against the *Corner Stone* and they will be broken to pieces; this stone will fall upon them to grind them and destroy their deeds, and scatter their dust upon the winds. For God has so promised: "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away*" (Mark xiii, 31).

This prophecy hovers over all human contentions and strivings. Perhaps we shall all find ourselves enveloped in a dense moral whirlwind; the high and the low, those at the right hand and at the left; those who are within the sanctuary and those

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

who are without; we who are consecrated to the service of the altar and they who serve at the throne. One swift breath of divine fate is enough to change the whole political map of Europe. These are not the times when anything whatsoever is secure. Our flag—may it not be torn to shreds by the sword of some conqueror? and our sumptuous cathedrals laid in ruins and the palaces of our magnates become the dwellings of birds of prey? Because now as ever,

*All things are passing,*

Yet in spite of the rapidity with which all that has ever existed has passed away,

*God is changeless.*

He is the same as He was yesterday, as He is today and will be forever. He is the same God Who created the world out of nothing, and placed in heavenly order the stars of the morning; Who made with the sun the high noon and the dawn; the same Who formed the first man from dust and

## *Only God Is Changeless*

Who conversed with Adam and Eve in Paradise; the same Who made manifest the Law on Sinai; Who died on Calvary; Who dwells in our tabernacles and within our very souls, counting the throbbings of our heart, and bestowing upon all His warmth and life, and the breath with which we pronounce His adorable name.

God presides over all changes, but He Himself does not change or alter His thoughts. He listens to the prayer of the penitent, to the sigh of the unfortunate; to the sweet canticle of innocence; yea, and to the horrible blasphemy of the apostate; but He is changeless; and He never is in haste.

In the inmost recesses of His divine heart He inscribes the names of those who bless Him; and in the book of infinite justice He writes the names of those who blaspheme Him.

Heaven becomes filled with Saints and hell receives its reprobates; God bestows His blessings on those who love Him and sends His chastisements upon those who re-

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

fuse to adore Him; He pardons the repentant sinner, protects and rewards the Saints, whilst chastising the wicked. But He is always the same God whether He chastises as Judge or caresses as Father.

O! my God! I delight in meditating upon the words of Thy prophet: "In the beginning, O Lord, Thou foundest the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and all of them shall grow old like a garment; and as a vesture Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed. But Thou art always the selfsame and Thy years shall not fail." (Psalm ci, 26-28.) Thou, O God, art as unchangeable as the eternity which is Thy throne and dwelling. Thou alone art eternal. Thou alone dost neither die nor tire, nor change. Outside of Thee,

*All things are passing,*

but Thyself—

*O God, Thou art changeless.*

## Chapter 3

*Patience gains all things.*

*The power of patience . . . Divine patience . . .  
Christian patience . . . Human patience.*

THE truly Christian soul possesses a certain invincible virtue which, in the midst of the continual changes of life and the instability of the human heart, gives it courage to overcome all obstacles, and in times of prosperity lifts it above all that is transitory, drawing it to God, the immutable and eternal. This powerful virtue is patience, whose grandeur was sung by our great poet in this forceful phrase:

*Patience gains all things.*

The world knows not how to appreciate all this sublime thought, because it is not easy for it to understand the supernatural strength of so humble a virtue, which seemingly lies in listless repose, but yet rules the

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

world. It holds the secret of the soul's strength as much in the philosophic order as in the Christian. It is well deserving the praise of our Holy Doctor. Ah! when the Saint speaks, there spring from her angelic lips the most sublime truths of Christian philosophy, wrapped in the purest and most delicate affections of an ardent soul, of

*"An enamored heart, that has fixed  
its thoughts on God alone."*

Patience is a passive virtue, yet it out-matches the strength of the most powerful adversary, and develops and accumulates it within the heart of him who possesses it. Its peculiar efficacy consists, not in forcefully vanquishing the enemy, but in wearing out his strength. The patient heart never exerts direct resistance, but allows the enemy to spend his energy and strength uselessly. The tender sapling that grows beside the stream does not put forth a stubborn resistance to the great sweep of waters, but rather bends patiently, so that they may

## Patience Gains All Things

pass around it and over it; and afterwards it rises up again full of life and vigor. Thus does the patient man behave.

But here, as in everything else, we may easily go to extremes. Passiveness of spirit in the face of *disappointments* and the tides of human passions can be sublime and virtuous, or it may degenerate and be low and degrading.

There are three kinds of patience, divine patience, human patience, and Christian patience—which is half divine and half human.

An underling of the high priests' court smote the adorable face of Jesus Christ with his fist, and the gentle Jesus held his peace. They stripped Him of His garments before a vile rabble and rent His sacred flesh with a cruel scourge, yet the Son of God uttered no complaint. Now, at this very moment, men, it seems, have declared war against God; His Holy Name is hardly spoken but to be outraged and insulted, now by the loathsome blasphemy of



### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

the tavern, now by the cultured and polished blasphemy of the drawing room; and yet God is silent. God need not hurry; God has patience. Behold divine patience.

Slaves without uttering a word obey at the crack of their master's whip. In demoralized cities thousands of strong, vigorous men patiently bend under the heavy chains of oppression, by which a harsh master has bound them. Behold human patience.

Blessed Job, having fallen from the height of fortune to the depth of misery, felt no repining towards God or indignation towards man, but with holy resignation he was content to scrape his sores with a potsherd. Behold the perfect model of Christian patience, practiced by all of God's elect, who, before and after Jesus Christ, have known how to suffer heroically.

Patience, when purely human, is never elevating, and often degrading. The ills that result to individuals and nations through that stoic passiveness which de-

## *Patience Gains All Things*

prives them of the energy needful to free themselves from their ignominious slavery, cannot be sufficiently deplored. On the contrary, divine and Christian patience is sublime and exalting, because it is practiced in imitation of Jesus Christ.

As to God's patience, it manifests His goodness adequately, for by it He bears with the sinner in order that he be converted. Neither men nor angels will ever understand the sublime grandeur of Jesus Christ in His infinite patience. He seems greater to me in the Praetorium than in the mansions of eternity, when with the Eternal Father He traced the paths of light and marked the limits of the sea. Job appears to me more radiant when, seated on his dunghill and forsaken by all, he sang in sublime accents of patient sorrow, than when he sat at home, loved by his sons, blessed by his friends and surrounded with oriental opulence.

These three kinds of patience produce different effects because they have different causes.

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

Jesus, as God, is omnipotent; as man He had at His command millions of powerful angels, and yet He allowed Himself to be seized and bound by a crowd of ruffians. Why does omnipotence veil itself before man's weakness? In order that this weakness may become omnipotent. If God had not been patient with the frailty of His two first creatures, the whole human race would have become extinct in its very beginning. If Jesus Christ had not had patience to suffer, the human race would never have been saved. Lucifer would have triumphed in his plan of disconcerting the harmonies of creation, and heaven would not be filled with saints. *God has had patience because He loves man.* And this divine patience has *gained all things*: it has maintained the first plan of creation in spite of human prevarication; it has humbled Lucifer and peopled the earth with men and heaven with saints.

The saintly Job, who so many centuries before Jesus Christ had the glory of being

## *Patience Gains All Things*

the most perfect personification of patience, certainly had no power to prevent his enemies from insulting him in his misfortune or to impede Satan from ill-treating his body, seizing his goods and killing his beloved sons; but he did have the power to rise above all these misfortunes and amid them to preserve peace of soul. He blessed God the same in adversity as in prosperity. He raised his heart so high above the world that it could not be sullied by the dust of earth. He suffered patiently not because he did not feel his woes, but because he had placed his innocence in the hands of God, Who has promised to protect those who confide in Him alone. And for this reason, while men and the devil made a horrible mockery of his body and of all he most esteemed, the heart of this Saint of patience reposed peacefully within the arms of God where it had been deposited by faith and hope. All truly Christian souls know how to act as did the patient Patriarch of the Land of Hus.

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

I realize that to unbelievers and to wasted worldly hearts this language is unintelligible—a confusion of words without sense; but for us who have the immense happiness of *being conscious* of the truths of our faith, it is a luminous doctrine overflowing with consolation. It is not easy for the unbelieving heart to understand Christian truths, if it does not strive to love them. It is a profound truth, drawn from attentive observation of human nature, that “one single spark of love enclosed within a heart, sheds more light than the perusal of a hundred philosophical volumes.”

The difference between the patience of the Idumæan Patriarch, and consequently of Christianity, and the resignation of the slave and the man without faith or belief is this: the just man suffers without complaint because he knows that God loves him, will defend him and reward with eternal glory his brief sufferings. The slave suffers resignedly because he has lost the sense of his own dignity, or the hope of

## *Patience Gains All Things*

being respected by the rest of mankind. He has not the energy to shake off his spiritual chains and break them to pieces in the face of his oppressors; he has raised his eyes to heaven, but it seemed to him a brazen arch above him. He can nowhere perceive signs of a wise and just Providence, Who watches the same over the poor and feeble as over the rich and powerful, and Who, sooner or later, in time or in eternity, will cause the injustice sanctioned by men to be set right and to disappear. He does not know that he is the adopted son of God, with a divine right to eternal glory. He does not realize that this is but a transitory life, a stepping stone to eternal life, which is gained by suffering. If he looks about, he beholds himself poor, weak and alone, with an endless chain of duties to perform and without any rights which his fellow men are bound to respect; he has believed that the law which rules the world and assigns each one's destiny is power, and only power; he feels his lot to be a product of frightful fatalism.

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

He who feels thus weak does not want to fight, or pray, or hope. He buries his brow in the dust as if to conceal his shame.

This patience is degrading; it slays all the nobler energies of the soul; whilst in human society it causes the ruin of nations. For the general insensibility of the individuals necessarily produces social and political inanition. Society is what the majority of the individuals who compose it and form its members are.

When the individuals suffer with only stoical patience the lash of their masters, be it wielded by a proud Roman of the time of Augustus, or in our times by the hand of some petty king, or a clever trickster who boasts the title of a party leader; when the majority of the individuals forming the active part of society have an ignoble patience and mutely bear their yoke, then the nation also will soon allow her honor to be smirched, history to be caricatured, and will even patiently submit to having her flag trampled under foot by some haughty



## *Patience Gains All Things*

conqueror. It is this merely stoical patience practiced by citizens, which produces inertness and debility in nations.

This torpid *patience* also *gains all things*, but in the way of evil. It was not such patience that received the praise of our great Doctor and Saint of Avila, because it belittles and degrades men and nations. The Saint sang only of the sublime and great patience of the Christian, which uplifts the soul from earth to heaven.

The patience that inspired holy Mother St. Teresa is not a trait of the enfeebled spirit, but of the lofty soul. It is the kind that gives strength to noble, Christian hearts, who, feeling themselves greater than any misfortune, know how to rise above all their trials.

Christian patience bears all ills, yea, even if men might buffet and spit upon our brow; but it will not allow them to wound or sully our heart, because it teaches us to raise it above the reach of the darts of envy and the poison thrusts of slander.

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

Within this precious virtue, unknown to the profane spirit, lies the secret of the strength of the just. It was this passive, humble and long-suffering virtue which, finally conquering and triumphing over all suffering, inspired our Holy Mother in life and death, and which, as we will prove, effectively.

*Gains all things.*

## Chapter 4

*Patience and human reason . . . The heart of man like unto the heart of God . . . It delights in spreading good . . . Patience opens the way . . . Wrath closes it . . . Adorable delights of trusting the Divine Goodness.*

IT IS not necessary to rise to the lofty heights of mystical contemplation, in order to understand the vast amount of virtue contained in patience. The philosophers of antiquity, even without being enlightened by faith, believed that in patience and moderation were to be found all man's practical knowledge. "Philosophy," says the illustrious Count de Maistre, "has long since learned that all man's science is contained in these two words: *Sustine et abstine*—suffer and abstain." (Conferences of St. Petersburg, I.)

It is not strange that philosophers should have understood the excellence of patience, for, although this emanates from the clear

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

light that religion sheds upon it, and from the supernatural power it communicates, yet considering this virtue only as a natural gift, as long as it is not degrading to human nature like the brutish insensibility of the slave, it contains something of loftiness, and is a sign of noble spirit. Not to be down-cast by the greatest misfortunes, but to endure them with serenity of soul, is the property of a valiant heart. To know how to be silent and suffer patiently amid unfavorable circumstances which it would be useless or even dangerous to resist—to have patience whilst awaiting an opportunity for overcoming an enemy—this may sometimes be consummate prudence and at other times artful villainy; but it is always the height of practical judgment.

Even considering patience only as the daughter of prudence and craftiness, it is still one among the greatest of human powers. What cannot be obtained through patience, will never be gained either by wisdom or strength without it. *The king-*

## *Delights of Trusting Divine Goodness*

*dom of heaven belongs to the poor of spirit,* but the dominion of the world belongs to the astute and the prudent according to the flesh. "*He is not fit to reign who knows not how to dissemble,*" have said all the disciples of Machiavelli. The best and only honest way of dissembling is to suffer the importunities of mankind; and bearing with mankind is the most difficult part of patience.

Purely natural patience and dissimulation are the offspring of cunning and prudence, and these are the masters of the world. Human wisdom has been able to teach nothing more practical to mankind, than to patiently bide one's time.

If St. Teresa of Jesus did not wear upon her brow the beautiful aureole of divinely infused science, and considering her only as a philosopher, she could still take her place among the greatest teachers of even human wisdom. Without having read the works of philosophers, she agreed with them in her great esteem for patience, and

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

she expressed it in the beautiful canticle upon which we are meditating, with greater perfection and beauty than they in their academical discourses.

The philosophers said that in moderation and patience was included all that man can know or practice in regard to virtue. And our Holy Mother, without attributing to this class either true wisdom or virtue, with perfect exactitude and beauty sang:

*Patience gains all things.*

Yet the mind of the great Saint beheld wider horizons than those of frail human reason. When she sang thus, she was thinking of heaven and of earth, of God and man, of divine and human verities and dispensations. She saw that equally in the attainment of heaven and in treating with human nature, patience is the great virtue which gains all things. To the mind of my Mother patience is not the result of human sagacity, nor does it energize accord-

## *Delights of Trusting Divine Goodness*

ing to human calculations; it is the gentle daughter of heaven, a supernatural virtue, a golden key with which we open all of God's treasures and man's capabilities.

Patience gains all things from God. God feels ineffable sympathy for those who suffer patiently. For them He reserves all the graces and all the tenderness of His Divine Heart. Jesus Christ called the peaceful the sons of God. On the other hand, the wrathful are insupportable to Him. In this, as in everything else, there is a great likeness between the heart of God and the human heart, in so much as the latter is a source of good; because our heart, the masterpiece of creation, is a copy and a reflection of the heart of God. This is why they both have, in a manner, similar laws of attraction and repulsion.

All who are truly eminent in some branch of knowledge or order of perfection, are offended by the arrogance of mediocrities and above all by the proud nonentities of that branch in which they themselves are

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

notable. Presumptuous ignorance, arrogant weakness and haughty poverty of mind are mortifying and offensive to the really wise, the powerful and the mentally rich. On the other hand, the greatest delight of wealthy men of noble heart is to dry the tears of the humble poor; and it is the best joy of the powerful to protect the feeble and helpless. There is not on this earth a joy to be compared with that felt by one who imparts truth and love to another soul, who is well disposed and in need of God's light and warmth. In this holy joy of communion with other souls, is found the secret inspiration of Christian genius. St. Teresa, whilst improvising those famous lyrics of hers, into which she poured her saintly heart, found inspiration in the thought that her beloved mother would read them and feel "a hidden rapture, because these sacred doctrines are the ones she so deeply loves, and which I first learned seated on her lap and reclining on her breast." The poet, overflowing with



## *Delights of Trusting Divine Goodness*

enthusiasm, writes his thoughts with the dream that the world, or at least some kindred souls, will read them and feel as he feels. The orator is overcome with lofty emotions, when from his platform he communicates to thousands of souls the light of truth and the fire of love. This is why kings in the realm of speech rejoice more intimately than kings of nations. It is certain that Solomon would not be as happy during forty years of peaceful reign, surrounded by all the pomp and splendor of the East, as was St. John Chrysostom, when with Christian eloquence he pronounced his immortal Homilies before auditors which often numbered many thousands. The deepest and most coveted joy of the apostle, poet, artist, indeed of all truly great souls, is to cause their light and love to spread into other souls, so that they too may know and venerate that which they themselves adore of moral or artistic beauty.

These are the natural laws we carry imprinted deeply in our souls; similar in this regard are the laws of God's heart.

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

God is most happy and joyful because He rests in His own center, that is, within Himself, Who is All Truth, Beauty and Love. We suffer because upon earth we are far away from our true home and native destiny. This is why we weep and, as the poet expresses it: "Banished angels are we, that is why we are always sad."

As beings separated from our true center it is only natural that many evils should befall us; because evil is none other than the privation of some good which should be ours. It would indeed be a miracle if we were to have complete happiness here in our exile, where failure and weeping are so common. This is why we were born into the world weeping; and weeping we shall die.

All the good that consoles us and the strength that sustains us can come to us only from God, Who is the first and only source of goodness and life. Hence when we become impatient against the adversity which must naturally befall us, we murmur

## *Delights of Trusting Divine Goodness*

against an all wise Providence, Who allows evil and privation to exist in the world precisely because the world is not heaven; because the road cannot be the same as the goal, and because the time of trial must differ from the time of recompense and repose. If besides being impatient, relying upon ourselves without thought of God, we become militant against the evils which God permits and think we are sufficient to overcome them, we thereby tell Him, indirectly, that we do not need Him to sustain us and make us happy. This often ends by our raising against Him a very wall of opposition. Herein pagan patience is the offspring of pride. God also is offended by his arrogant, weak and yet haughty creatures. That is why we displease Him when we are impatient and so He denies us the special graces of His Heart.

Is it then necessary to resign ourselves with indifference to all manner of evils that can possibly befall us, without even a right to breathe a sigh or articulate a single word

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

of pain? Must we allow ourselves to be dragged down by disappointments without showing any resistance whatsoever—as if we were beings deprived of reason, liberty and strength? Is this slothful passivity to be mistaken for Christian patience—the virtue so highly commended by mystics and ascetics, and especially by the great Doctor of Carmel?

No; virtue commands us to suffer, but it also forbids us to succumb. That slothful indifference, which in the face of serious trials despoils man of all his energies, displeases God no less than the proud presumption that wishes by its own strength to scale the very heavens. I do not know who offends God most, those who whilst suffering want to question omnipotence for the reason of their sorrows, or those who succumb in adversity, and without a thought of heaven sink down to the very dust.

God did not make us for tears. He would not have formed the human heart always to be tied down to the earth. He

## *Delights of Trusting Divine Goodness*

would not have made it capable of such beautiful sentiments and lofty aspirations towards the infinite, if it were His pleasure to keep it forever in the mire of grief. His adorable will is to exalt and perfect the human heart by His intimate communications with man; for this reason He made our hearts most imperfect but yet infinitely perfectible. "The Lord made man and He enriches him," says Holy Scripture.

As Sovereign Artist, He feels an infinite delight in communicating to created beings His infinite light, His immense love and His incomprehensible grace. What most annoys Him is all that deprives Him of this holy intercourse with His creatures. In order to experience this divine joy He created other beings like unto Himself with whom He might communicate: this is the one reason for which angels and men were created.

Before communicating to our minds the plenitude of His love and light, He subjected us to a test so that we ourselves might

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

co-operate in the attainment of our happiness. This test has consisted in making us feel, during a certain interval, the privation of His light and love, so that we, desiring it, might ask for the gift and make use of our free will in accepting it.

The angels felt this privation for only an instant. Lucifer and his companions did not resign themselves, thinking their natural perfection sufficient for obtaining it, and God, offended by such arrogance, cast them headlong into the abyss of hell.

Eve, through her womanly eagerness, had not the patience to wait until God should disclose to her all the knowledge of good and evil. She dared to forestall God's designs, and she was cast out of Eden. A portion of mankind have sinned like Lucifer, telling God they do not need Him in order to attain to the truth in an undefined progress. Others complain, like Eve, because He makes them wait so long, oppressed with so many cares; and some seem to tell Him that they ignore the joys of

## *Delights of Trusting Divine Goodness*

heaven; they do not feel the courage to strive for what they deem so difficult, preferring to grovel indolently in the dust, bent under the weight of their anxieties, rather than to tread the road to heaven with its toils and hardships.

The proud, who, like Lucifer, believe that without God they can attain to the enjoyment of truth and satisfy their hearts, as well as those who, like Eve, feel the time of trial too long and follow a path not marked out for them by God, for attaining the height of perfection to which they are destined, as also they who renounce the gifts of God because they believe them unnecessary or think they are too costly—all of these oppose God's purpose, for He created heaven and earth for the pleasure of communicating to His creatures the effusions of His divine heart.

But the souls who, when they feel tired, do not succumb nor murmur against Providence, but the more afflicted they feel the more they thirst after the light and love of

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

heaven and the more eagerly implore it of God; those who, when persecuted and calumniated feel no indignation against men and do not defend themselves (unless obliged to by reason of justice or charity), but leave everything in the hands of Providence, offering up all their trials in satisfaction for their sins—these are the souls who merit the sympathies of the Divine Heart. Souls dearest to God are always those who, though bowed down by sorrow, do not allow themselves to be depressed, nor place their confidence in creatures; but, raising their eyes towards heaven, hope for consolation only from God.

God has made the human heart marvelously perfectible, because He made it capable of union with the infinite; and when the heart becomes dull and inactive, He sends disappointments to arouse it, and to revive its yearning for heaven and its hunger for truth, in order to have the sovereign joy of delighting and comforting it. This He does partially here below by faith, hope



## *Delights of Trusting Divine Goodness*

and interior graces, by satisfying it in heaven with the plenitude of truths and bliss. Behold the adorable delights of the Heart of God, the end of all His works with creatures, namely, to communicate to souls truth, love and eternal bliss.

But God in communicating Himself to souls through His gifts, desires them to invoke Him with love and with constancy. They who do not suffer do not call upon Him thus, because they are well pleased with the things of earth. This is why He sends them sufferings.

Therefore our trials are that bitterness which God places in the things of earth, so that, detaching ourselves from them, we shall love the things of heaven.

Trials without patience are not acceptable to God, because they either cause us to murmur against Providence or deprive us of our energies and plunge us deeper in the mire of despondency. Sorrow and patience are the two wings by which we rise from earth to heaven and approach towards

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

God. No one who has reached the use of reason has been saved without suffering, and no one has been sanctified by sorrow without patience. The most efficacious means of approaching the uncreated source of Truth and Goodness is sorrow endured with hearty courage.

The souls best disposed to receive God's blessings are those who suffer most with greatest resignation. This is the secret of the whole system of Providence in the moral government of the world. To communicate Himself to souls such as these, is the sweetest of the divine complacencies; and it was in order to enjoy them He created the world. To such souls and to them alone does He bestow in abundance His infinite gifts.

Therefore *patience* thus placed in union with sorrow, is that great power of God by which he *gains all things*.

## Chapter 5

*Mercy more charming than justice . . . The companion of patience . . . A costly alms . . . Patience overcomes the wickedness and inconstancy of men.*

WHAT a wonderful judge of hearts was our Holy Mother St. Teresa. How well she understood human frailty; she knew that only

*Patience gains all things,*

not from God alone, but even from men.

We do not know why; it may be because men are generally more feeble than perverse; but it is certain that they are fonder of the dispensers of mercy than of the ministers of justice. Justice always weighs heavily on us, and when not tempered by mercy it causes positive terror. Mercy, on the contrary, is always smiling and lovable. It steals imperceptibly into the proudest and most obdurate hearts and conquers them by its sweetness.

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

But this lovely virtue is so intimately united with patience, that in its principal acts it becomes blended with it. To bestow on a neighbor, and especially on those with whom we live, the alms of dissembling their defects is a real work of mercy, and sometimes an act of sublime patience. We can give this alms to everyone; and we ourselves are in need of it; but it is often very costly. It is easy to take a coin from one's pocket to succor the needs of the poor; but to have always ready in the heart a wealth of indulgence, gentleness and charity with which to conceal the defects of our neighbors and suffer without resentment their inequalities of character, is so difficult that it becomes impossible to a heart abandoned to its own resources. This is where the invincible power of supernatural patience comes to its aid. There are men who will perform metallic—financial—acts of charity, but for all they may squeeze their hearts they cannot extract a single drop of indulgent affection, in order to give to their

## *Mercy More Admirable Than Justice*

equals or inferiors by the estimable alms of gentleness and kindly dissimulation. Patience is the inexhaustible treasure of generous hearts.

The patient heart has always strength to love its neighbor and reasons for excusing him his defects. It is not unaware of the frailties of human nature, but it does not try to do away with them by fire and sword, like jealous spirits or imprudent ones; nor does it, like the flatterer, conceal his faults under the cloak of adulation. It knows that the human heart always has some good qualities, and for these it can esteem and even praise him, without any need of flattering. It never refers to his defects except when justice or charity demands it, and then only in words of sincere friendship and even tender affection.

The heart that manifests itself in this manner is almost omnipotent. There is no one who can resist it. Sooner or later it will make of men what it wants them to be; it will conquer them without inflicting hu-

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

miliations. What neither reason nor eloquence nor justice could obtain will be won by the patient, enduring and generous heart. This is the secret of the Saint's strength.

The moral nature of a man is formed not by his theories, nor precisely by his actions, but his heart, his most interior consciousness. The most sacred thing—and most difficult in the world to understand—is the human heart and conscience. Nevertheless these hidden things are too often the ones least respected, and about which we presume to know most. If during a social gathering science is discussed, there will be many who cannot join in the conversation, and it will become necessary to change its topic. But if the most difficult subject in the world to discuss, that of the moral nature of a person, is brought up, everyone will think himself sufficiently well instructed to define it, and authorized to do so. And the worst of it is, that in social life one must bow to these judgments. Alas,

## *Mercy More Admirable Than Justice*

that we must always be considered what men have persisted in making us.

They will make us change our moral position many times over, they will want us to fill all different roles. Without having changed a particle in our heart or conscience, today they will raise us upon the pinnacle of fame and tomorrow they will cast us down and cover us with mire. One sentence spoken, and even a malicious reticence cleverly interjected into a conversation, or slipped into the columns of a newspaper, will suffice to change mankind's opinions about us. It is useless to oppose one's self to the current of human opinion. Against its force there is no efficacious recourse but the divine stability of Christian patience. Man in judging the life of his neighbor, nearly always, even unconsciously, has for adviser his personal affections. We can hardly ever exercise the calmness we display when treating of ordinary affairs. Never have men appeared to me so small as when I have seen them judg-

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

ing others. They discuss things not as they understand them, but according to how they feel. They are guided not by the light of truth, clear as that of the sun, but rather by the sentiments of the heart, blinding and fluctuating as flashes of lightning.

The soul's passions, dazzling and even blinding the mind, are like gushing torrents; they rush onward full of noise—and presently are still. Their strength is momentary, yet irresistible, whosoever attempts to confront them will be hurled aside as by a mighty whirlwind. The way to conquer them is not by trying to check their advance, but by securing a firm foothold while the impetus of their force lasts. Patience, in a word, fortifies the heart and restrains it, so that it remains steadfast when struck by the onrush of human passions. At last from out of the tempest of passion rises the rainbow of peace.

The heart that knows not how to rise above the fallacy of human judgments, will



## *Mercy More Admirable Than Justice*

become entangled among the ruins of human reputations, including its own.

Whoever allows himself to be overcome in this way has no right to complain of man's injustice towards him, because he has not striven to rise above it. The most unjust in this regard are the very ones who complain most bitterly about men's injustice in general. To expect just treatment from others, we must first be just in our dealings with them; and it is better still if we are merciful. But this justice can be obtained from men—we might almost say—without seeking for it, by means of Christian patience.

After the tempest has raged with greatest fury on the summit of the mountains without being able to disturb their calm, majestic grandeur, the sun's rays shine forth with greater splendor upon their lofty peaks, bathing them in a nimbus of light. When men have striven most to harass and vex a human heart without succeeding, there comes a time when they tire of this;

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

the passions are stilled; men have lucid moments and are more apt to judge correctly. Hearts tried in this manner become more beautiful. The constant friction caused by opposition renders them bright and lustrous, and the light that emanates from souls tried by misfortune and sustained by patience gives them a clear insight into their own depths. Men cease to misunderstand one another, they judge them correctly, and especially crown their neighbor's brow with the aureole of brotherly love.

It is true that this light revealing the beauty of souls—the result of constant patience—as a rule shines forth only in the evening of life. Many times we fully know men only after they are dead. It is like the fading sunlight, that tinges the sky only after the sun itself has disappeared into the deep valleys beyond the horizon.

## Chapter 6

*Self-knowledge . . . . How difficult it is . . . . Painful interior struggles . . . . The heart tires or goes astray . . . .  
The need of patience in order to bear  
with our own selves.*

LASTLY, patience is the greatest preservative against the weakness of our own hearts. With it man can obtain all things from himself; in fact, it is no less necessary to us in our intimate dealings with self than in our social relations with others.

This is a matter that may well be pondered over in the sweet shades of solitude. It solves problems both difficult and little known, because we must begin by searching our own hearts, and from there go on to the fact that there are so few who really cultivate the science of self-knowledge. "*My heart is unable to know itself,*" said St. Augustine. It is a difficult thing to know others, but it is no less difficult to know one's self. Chesterfield was amazed to find

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

in the drawing rooms of London, scholars who had treated intimately with men all their lives, and yet had failed to understand the human heart; but it is still more strange that men who have lived with themselves so many years have not yet attained to self-knowledge. Two-thirds of the human race go down to the grave without having had a single intimate conversation with themselves. We like to live and talk without—but not within. Men have a knowledge of almost everything; it is only themselves that they ignore. We would certainly be in a very grave predicament, if there were sent to each one of us a detachment of Levites like those sent by the priests from Jerusalem to St. John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan, asking: "Who art thou; what sayest thou of thyself?" How dost thou define thyself? (John i, 22.) Let us but converse a few moments with our own hearts, and we will understand the great need we have of patience in our dealings with self.

It is said that within each one of us there

## *Painful Interior Struggles*

exists an antithetical dualism, two beings constantly warring with each other. Indeed, I think there are more than two; there are at least as many as there are combatants that wage war together within us, because all struggles suppose a plurality. Within us, then, are battling not only the spirit and the flesh; conscience and the senses; the soul and the body; the angel and the brute, as Pascal would say—all of which are in constant mutual warfare; but even the very faculties of the soul are in perpetual internecine confusion.

They were given to man in order to perfect him, so that, united in complete harmony, they would aid each other in their functions; but sin wrought such havoc in human nature, that our faculties are hardly ever able mutually to assist each other without breeding confusion. The fancy distracts the reason; the heart does not move in accordance with the will; and meanwhile the senses disturb the mind and the imagina-

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

tion, weaken the will and heart and exhaust and destroy themselves.

In most of the actions of life men, without being aware of it, abdicate the rights of the reason in favor of the fancy. In their thoughts they are not guided by the mind, which, receiving light from the lofty regions of truth, judges things as they really are; but they allow themselves to be inspired and influenced by the fancy, which sees objects always in the light of its own imaginings. It forms and embellishes things according to the heart's tastes rather than the realities of life; forms for itself ideas of things that do not exist and imagines itself living amongst them. In this way our fancy is always deceiving us, forming illusions and weaving golden dreams. We see things not as they really are, but as we would like them to be. If we observe carefully we find that most of the time we wander about deluded, thinking that we reason when in reality we only fancy. The impulses that guide our thoughts do not

## *Painful Interior Struggles*

come from the serene mansions of truth, but from the lower abodes of the affections and the senses. This is why our opinions change oftener than the winds; they are as variable as the heart's dreams and the creatures of fancy. There are but few men who always discuss things with calm judgment, because in certain affairs it is very difficult to free one's self from the influence of the fancy and of the heart's emotions. We spend most of our time day-dreaming, and, no doubt through fear of being humbled, we refrain from asking ourselves, even in the most serious cases, whether we are reflecting or only dreaming, whether we are being guided by reason or fancy, by emotions or by realities. We lack the patience to train our thoughts and control our imagination. This accounts for the confusion often found even in the best endowed minds.

This confusion descends from the mind down into the most hidden recesses of the soul, of the will, and of the heart. What the fancy is to the mind, the heart is to the

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

will. The latter is a spiritual force, the source and center of the soul's *volitions* and of its energies, and all the graver purposes of life. The heart is the seat of tenderness and affection, of joy and all emotions. These two faculties are given us so as to harmonize and complete each other. The will contains strength and energy; the heart, emotion and poesy. A heart without will power is fickle and inconstant; it is affected by everything and has much to suffer. A will bereft of the tenderness of the heart is harsh, and wounds those with whom it comes in contact. A man who is all heart and lacks will power inspires pity. A man of great will power, but heartless and incapable of feeling, is repulsive; he is useful in business, but worthless in family or other life.

Perfect harmony between these two faculties constitutes the moral perfection of man; but there are very few who have attained to this. This is where sin left its



## Painful Interior Struggles

deepest mark, for discord between the will and the heart are very common.

The heart can separate itself from the will in two ways, by *tiring or overexerting* itself. Conscience, for example, dictates that we must perform a certain painful duty. With our will we desire to do it and desire it sincerely, but the heart with its tenderness and sensibility rises in revolt, or at any rate cannot conform itself to the will; it grows tired and faint and we feel no joy, but only repugnance in fulfilling that duty. Then it is that we *desire* but cannot *feel*; or, what is the same thing, we would *desire to desire*, or, as David would say in his beautiful language: "My soul hath coveted to long for Thy justifications: *Concupivit anima mea desiderare justificationes tuas*" (Psalm cxviii, 20). There are times when it seems that we almost drag our hearts along.

It is sometimes said that it is easy to love and to desire. Without penetrating the deep secrets of philosophy to ascertain what

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

is the immediate force that gently moves the will and heart to love, but dwelling only upon psychological phenomena as they present themselves to the human mind, I maintain that there is nothing so difficult in life as to love, especially when the heart opposes itself to it. The will, without the aid of the heart, soon tires and grows discouraged. Then it is more difficult to desire than to act.

This is the most common malady of the heart, and, as an eminent psychologist has said: "The difficulty does not lie so much in controlling the heart, so that it may not overexert itself, but rather in making it *go*." It easily tires, weakens, becomes, as it were, anæmic, and dies of cold. The heart tires; and then the will, without its aid, weakens. This is the reason for the great fickleness of humanity.

Nevertheless the heart sometimes overflows with life and feels too intensely, much more so than we would desire. It is then that our thoughts wander where the will

## *Painful Interior Struggles*

would not wish, and leave the latter alone. This is very harassing, and it has bedewed every corner of the world with tears.

Wheresoever the light of the sun has shone, there man has stood bewailing the sorrows of his heart. Yet no one has depicted them as graphically as the Prophet-King when he cried: "My heart hath forsaken me" (Psalm xxxix, 13). This thought alone is a whole poem in itself, a complete canticle of the soul's sufferings and the heart's wanderings. In union with St. Paul and St. Jerome, who sang in accents of sorrow the weakness and wanderings of their hearts, there have always ascended to heaven laments of countless saintly souls, which form the most beautiful portion of Christian poetry. Alas! in what confusion are the minds and hearts of men! What a great truth spoke he who sang: "Man is a soul in ruins!"

In order to be able to endure the harassing company of the warring beings within us, we must make use of all the resources of

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

patience. We must bear with the fancies and illusions of our mind, the inconstancies of our will, and the dreams of our fancy. "We are always children," said Balmes, "and as a child we must treat our heart. With firmness, yes; but also with love, gentleness and patience. By over-severity we can gain nothing. The man who is irritable with himself will never have control of his soul. The sweet and original St. Francis of Sales has written many golden pages on the gentleness, indulgence, and tenderness with which we must treat our own heart" (Devout Life, part III, chap. IX). A Kempis says: "That by patience and humility, and the assistance of grace, we must conquer all the frailties of human nature" (Imitation of Christ, book I, chap. XIII).

But the great eulogist of patience as the remedy against the weakness of our own hearts, is the peerless Doctor of Carmel, our St. Teresa. The verse upon which we are now meditating may be considered as

### *Painful Interior Struggles*

the fifth principal one of her ascetic doctrines with regard to God, our neighbor and our own heart. She had absolute confidence in gentleness and perseverance, that is to say, in patience. In her great work, *The Interior Castle of the Soul*, rising to sublime, mystical heights, she pictures with inimitable mastery the heart's inner struggles, and as a remedy for calming them she recommends constant gentleness. She does not demand self-impatience in order to attain to sanctity and the victory over one's faults. She dislikes all manner of violence; and she has placed absolute confidence in patience. She knew, and sang of it with that angelical grace which no one will ever be able to equal, that from God, man, and our own hearts,

*Patience alone gains all things.*

## Chapter 7

*Patience raises us towards God... God has need of man... How He exalts him by faith and hope... He enriches him—in the mind, in the soul, in the heart... Providence, bread and labor...  
The Evangelical Counsels.*

PATIENCE is the immense strength of the weak. With it everything can be obtained from God, from men, and from our own hearts. It is a magic word, which sheds light in the mind and warmth in the heart. It distinguishes the solid virtues from apparent ones, and crowns knowledge with the aureole of sanctity. God himself has bestowed its highest praise: *The learning of a man is known by his patience, and his glory is to pass over wrongs* (Prov. xix, 11).

Patience is the greatest of human powers; the staff upon which he must lean who would rise into the moral world; it is a shield that casts back all the darts of calumny; it is the corrective in which the

## *Patience Raises Us Towards God*

acid of our own wrath and that of others is dissolved, forming the inestimable salt of Christian resignation; but above all patience gives us wings to soar from earth to heaven, and draw nearer to God when the thorns here below pierce us. Heaven seems wholly beautiful when on earth we weep. The memory of God is sweetest when without being discouraged we suffer much.

The heart that has been wounded and betrayed by men and that has passed through the crucible of suffering, yet is always sustained by patience, begins to be consoled only when it seeks its comfort and places all its confidence in God. Therefore does our celestial poet sing the happy lot of souls who, on the wings of patience, rose above the miseries of earth and threw themselves into the arms of God. And this is what she sang in this brief and simple phrase, so concise and so profoundly wise as to epitomize nearly the whole of Christian teaching:

*Who possesseth God wanteth nothing.*

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

God is the adequate object of our minds and hearts. The mind being made for truth and the heart for love and both for beauty, God, who is the uncreated truth and essence of infinite beauty and love, alone can fully satisfy the desires of the human soul.

God and man, often enough without the latter being aware of it, have mysterious mutual sympathies—they seek and in a certain way need each other. Man has need of God as the poor man of the rich, as the weak of the strong, as the sick of the physician, as the eyes of light, as the trees of sap, as the bodily system of blood, and as the soul of hope. And God also has need of man. You ask: How can omnipotence have need of dust and light of darkness? Ah, yes! It is indeed a truth which the mind cannot understand, but the heart feels it, loves it and adores it. God has need of man as the artist of the canvas on which he depicts his soul's greatest conceptions; as genius after its lofty flights needs another mind on which to shed its light and to



## *Patience Raises Us Towards God*

whom it can communicate its ideals, another heart to warm with its ardor and enthusiasm; as a mother needs her children to press to her breast and to tell them of her ardent love. By a mystery that neither angels nor men will ever be able to understand, God loves man and he that loves needs the heart he loves, to whom he may whisper that intimate language which the human tongue can scarcely articulate without profaning a divine language.

In order that these two beings who thus need and seek each other may find each other, a merciful and wise Providence causes man to rise and God to come down; and when they meet they embrace, and thus united soar to heaven where God will reign eternally with His Saints (Apoc. xxii, 5).

From this meeting and embrace between God and man springs the happiness of the human heart. According as this divine tie is intimate and perfect, so will the soul's happiness be fulfilled and its constant and ardent aspirations satisfied. In heaven this

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

tie is perfect and indissoluble, because we will see clearly and without figures the divine essence as it is, in Itself, according to the language of the Apostle of tenderness and love. Hence happiness there must be most perfect, most complete, and eternal.

Here on earth the tie is weak. We possess God only by an imperfect faith, hope and charity. It does not satisfy the heart's desires, and for this reason it is something fully realized only in the next life.

Notwithstanding the present imperfection of this union, yet even now to possess God, if only by the longings of faith, hope and charity, is the happiest lot that can fall to us on earth. The heart that possesses God in this way, if it compares itself with those who do not possess Him, may well exclaim that it wanteth nothing.

He has great wealth who keeps in his soul the treasures of faith, hope and charity for all the world, for God's sake and towards men. Whoever has faith has nobility; he has no need of family pedigree or creden-

## *Patience Raises Us Towards God*

tials of nobility who by a simple act of faith can trace his pedigree to Paradise itself and count God as his parental origin. He can never feel ashamed of his lineage who contents himself with his divine affiliation. Furthermore, in the secret of his soul he guards another claim, that of sanctifying grace, which gives him the right to look towards heaven as the eternal source of all nobility, and as his future home. He may be poor, lowly, uncouth, and infirm—it does not matter; he is none the less the adopted son of God, with the right to an eternal inheritance of peace and happiness. In order to enjoy it, he need only wait until he crosses the paternal threshold of a happy death. While he is on earth he is on his way. His arrival will be death, which for the Christian who has faith and charity is but a slumber whose awakening will be within the arms of God. Amongst men of faith, of charity and of hope, there can be no class disinherited nor any plebeians; all are noblemen and princes. The titles of

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

our greatness are contained in this document given to us by God Himself—“*I have said: Ye are gods and all the sons of the Most High*” (Psalm lxxxi, 6).

On the other hand, how poor and desolate is the soul bereft of faith; who knows not what it is, from whence it came, nor whither it is going! How lonely the breast destitute of infinite hopes and longings! How sad the heart that does not love with a love that shall be eternal! Unbelievers wilfully forsake their royal prerogatives, destroy the titles of their divine adoption, and renounce their heavenly inheritance. Against such as these has God pronounced His terrible sentence of degradation and seclusion from Paradise.

Immensely rich is he who possesses God; incomprehensibly poor is he who is bereft of Him. Whoever possesses Him in this world has all he needs during his brief sojourn here below; for he has faith, hope and charity, and these are all he needs, inasmuch as he is a traveler who goes quickly

## *Patience Raises Us Towards God*

on from time to eternity, from earth to heaven.

And as what is secondary always follows what is primary, so these spiritual gifts of divine faith and grace are followed by others of a precious though inferior order. God, in uniting Himself to man by grace, enriches him so that he lacks nothing, not only in the spiritual order, but also in the intellectual, moral and material order, inasmuch as these latter are necessary for the conservation of the first.

*Who hath God wanteth nothing*, even in the intellectual order.

He may be neither a mathematician, nor an astronomer, nor a historian, nor a rhetorician, nor versed in any human science whatsoever; but he has what De Maistre called with much inspiration the *instinct of truth*.

People who are virtuous and filled with God *feel* the truth; they are able to distinguish it in as far as it is necessary for the

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

principal acts of their lives; they have a clear and steady light, not proceeding from any human institution, illuminating them without dazzling them, and which bestows on them an abundance of practical religious sense. They have not sought truth by means of any philosophical system, and yet they are replenished with it. It sometimes seems as if their souls are bathed in a veritable ocean of light.

They know God, who is the light, and this radiant knowledge shines not only on the conscience and heart, but also sheds rays on the events of their life, and, although living in the same circumstances as the rest of mankind, it gives them a great advantage over them. "The science of God," says the illustrious Donoso Cortes, "imparts to those who possess it prudence and strength, because at the same time it stimulates and expands the mind—I do not know of any man accustomed to converse with God and exercise himself in divine contemplation, who, although placed in the same circumstances

## *Patience Raises Us Towards God*

as the rest of mankind, does not surpass them in that practical and prudent judgment called *good sense*." And the renowned Gaume adds: "It is from thence must we look for the science of life, sound judgment, the truth of propositions, the knowledge of the synthesis which combines the end with the means and the means with the end, the practical discernment of things—life's great teacher, as Bossuet used to call it."

Time testifies to the truth of these assertions. When rulers were men filled with the spirit of God, such as Recaredo, St. Ferdinand, Cisneros and Isabel the Catholic, little was said about truth and virtue, and much done. In times of unbelief, statesmen have withdrawn from God, at any rate they do not want Him at their side while they legislate. You cannot deny their talent, for they are scholars and doctors and speak with fascinating eloquence; but *good sense* is lacking. In their minds there is light, but it is an artificial light, which stupefies

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

and dazzles, killing the noble energies of the souls of individuals and of nations. Ah! it is because these minds have not God; and if the mind that *hath God wanteth nothing*, the mind bereft of Him has scarcely anything of avail.

Neither can they who possess God lack anything either in the moral or emotional order. Because grace not only enlightens the mind by faith, but through the other theological virtues it strengthens the will and inflames the heart; and this divine fire neutralizes the flame of the senses. Then the law of God becomes sweet and easy, weariness and languor become things of the past. All our disorderly passions are silent, whilst the heart, gently dilated with the sweetness of divine grace, runs swiftly along the path of the most arduous duties.

Even in the material order does God favor abundantly those who possess Him. The words to this effect are clear and definite: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God*



## *Patience Raises Us Towards God*

*and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Luke xii, 31).

By no means does this signify that we are dispensed from the law of labor. God does not want us idle. In the material order, the same as in the spiritual order, He requires our co-operation. He gives us grace and with this we have all the necessary helps for salvation; but we must make use of it by practicing acts of virtue; it is thus that we shall save our souls. In the material order man plans his work and God blesses it and gives him abundant graces. Man plows and sows the seed, but God causes it to grow and bear fruit. With man's labor and God's blessing there can be nothing wanting to ultimate perfection in the material order. Yet even from the law of material labor has Providence partly dispensed those who consecrate themselves completely to His service. The passage of the Holy Gospel which relates how Our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed this law, is one of the sweetest and most tender of Holy Scripture. "Therefore

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not of much more value than they? . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith? . . . " (Matt. vi., 25-30). "And seek not you what you shall eat or what you shall drink; . . . But your Father knoweth that you have need of these things" (Luke xii, 29, 30).

God has therefore solemnly pledged His word of honor. Those who consecrate themselves entirely to His service will be wanting in nothing, even as the birds of the air and the lilies of the field want nothing.

## *Patience Raises Us Towards God*

For two thousand years, uncounted thousands of young men and maidens have continually been seen to renounce everything, be it large or small, and leave their paternal homes, without more means of support than this beautiful institution of the Holy Gospel. Unnumbered heroes have crossed seas and continents, trusting entirely to God's Providence for their support. The world has ridiculed and scoffed at them, yet men, always moved by a secret impulse, have found their way into the desert or to the door of the lowly hut in order to carry them a piece of bread. This is the ever-living miracle existing even in these days of utter indifference.

It is divine Providence, who teaches us today as ever, that in no matter what sphere he lives, he

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

## Chapter 8

*Our Holy Mother St. Teresa . . . Her profound and practical knowledge of divine things and of the human heart . . . Her wonderful terseness of expression . . . Immense void in the human soul . . . It can have or possess God, both in this world and in the next.*

IT IS not easy to understand all of the truths enclosed in a single verse of the canticles composed by the inspired poet of Carmel. Her thoughts rise to such heights and her flights are at times so varied, that it becomes almost impossible to follow her.

Her language seems divine, not only for its æsthetic beauty, but above all for deep penetration in divine truth. With a single word, with the briefest phrases, she expresses great truth of a very distinct nature. Her thoughts may be studied in different lights, and yet they always are noble, lofty, luminous and full of wisdom. Her words

## *Our Holy Mother Saint Teresa*

are rays of light that shed forth sparks of fire that enkindle our hearts.

A lady of distinguished and cultured society, a holy nun and privileged Spouse of Jesus Christ, she yet practically knows the deceitfulness of the world, the charms of virtue, and the secrets of the Heart of God. She dwelt more in heaven than on earth; she had familiar intercourse with angels and saints: the Blessed Virgin often visited her, and she often saw at her side Our Divine Lord himself. Like another St. Paul, she was raised, not once, but many times, in wonderful ecstasies to heaven, and in spirit she traversed the eternal mansions of bliss. There she recognized some of her relatives and friends, among whom were her saintly parents. (Life, chap. XXXVIII, No. 1.) The mystery of the Blessed Trinity was manifested to her in marvelous light, as the all-attracting source of the soul's happiness. Purgatory and hell were also shown to her, and for a few brief mo-

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

ments she experienced the terrible pains of those dreary abysses.

She had therefore a *practical* knowledge of the greater part of the mysteries of our holy religion, superior to that of Dante. She describes to us the mysteries *beyond the grave*.

Possessing thus a profound and practical knowledge of the human heart and of the mysteries of our divine religion, she spoke with clear, discerning knowledge, and her thoughts are luminous beacon lights reflecting truth, both natural and revealed. They illumine the tortuous paths of this life and give us a glimpse into the deep secrets of eternity. The writings of our Saint taught and ravished with delight and admiration the gentle soul of St. Francis of Sales and St. Alphonsus Liguori, as well as the genius of Bosuet and the marvelous talent of Leibnitz. In loftiness and grandeur, and especially in the beautiful freedom with which she expresses her thoughts, she resembles the holy prophets of old. These, in a single

## *Our Holy Mother Saint Teresa*

actual vision, would foresee events the most unconnected and which were distant from each other thousands and thousands of years. In the same way they frequently announced the future as past. In a like manner, the Saint in her writings speaks with the same readiness of the most simple and transcendental matters. There are solemn moments in which she seems to rest upon the threshold of time and of eternity, unveiling the vast boundaries of the visible and invisible worlds; for she tells us with astonishing clearness and wonderful precision of things temporal as well as eternal.

At times it seems that she participates in angelical knowledge; for if the angels contain in very few ideas their extensive knowledge, the most hidden secrets of nature as well as intellectual truths, St. Teresa sang sometimes in a single phrase the attitude of Divine Providence in heaven and on earth, with regard to the human race.

No one has ever been able to express in a more exact and concise manner than she

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

did, the sublime happiness of the heart that possesses God, now by faith in this life, again by the beatific vision in heaven. Ascetics have written innumerable treatises to prove the peace, joy and divine consolation experienced by hearts, who with unbounded confidence throw themselves into the arms of God. Theologians have written massive volumes explaining the happiness of souls who in heaven enjoy the unveiled beauty of the Deity. Our Saint has spoken less and said much more; in a single phrase she has sung of the action of Divine Providence on souls, and the joys God imparts to them in time as well as in eternity:

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

This thought is true in every sense and becomes more beautiful, the greater the height of vision in which we study it. We do not know whether the Saint wrote it after prolonged meditation and experience of the blessings which God showers upon those who, in this life, surrender themselves



## *Our Holy Mother Saint Teresa*

to Him; or whether she composed it during moments of divine inspiration, when in ecstasy she was raised to heaven and allowed to contemplate the joys of eternal bliss. We are ignorant as to whether she wished to set forth the beneficent action of Providence upon hearts that confide in God alone, or if with a single stroke of the pen she wished to portray the divine fulness of love and the eternal joys of the Blessed, related as if by one who has actually seen and tasted them. But it is certain that she expresses all this with a clearness and accuracy that is astonishing.

This thought, as applied to the inhabitants of earth, is a synthesis of the Holy Gospel, a compendium of Divine Providence in His action on souls who believe and hope. Applied to those who are already in possession of heaven, it is the clearest and most compendious explanation of Beatitude. More could not be said, nor in less words. Everything that is said afterwards will be but comments on this thought,

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

for nothing can be added that it does not virtually express.

*Who hath God* by faith and hope in this life, *wanteth nothing* he can need on his brief journey from earth towards heaven.

But *who hath God* in heaven with that perfect possession, the eternal and indissoluble tie of love and light peculiar to eternal bliss, *wanteth nothing* in order to satisfy the infinite capacity of his mind, the ardent longing of his heart and his soul's most sublime aspirations.

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

Ah! This is a wonderful thought; one of the most beautiful that ever blossomed from the pen of our celestial Doctor. Herein are virtually explained the most difficult mysteries of human life. Herein lies material for assiduous meditation for the most brilliant minds, the most ardent hearts and the most inspired genius. Reason, genius, sentiment, all have in this single phrase most ample scope in which to bask at will in divine sunlight, without ever reaching its

## *Our Holy Mother Saint Teresa*

confines. Herein are compended theology and philosophy.

*Who hath God . . .* But, what? Can we possess God? Can dust hold immensity? Yes. But how, in how many ways? In order to *hold* God, what relations are possible? Which of these are already established? In what manner do we actually *hold* them and how do we hope to complete them?

Behold the sum total of theology, all of the transcendental philosophy of the world, and even the entire history of the human race. *For all is man's and man is God's* (I Cor. iii, 22 and 23).

Our Saint, uplifted on the wings of faith, sets forth, not only as possible but as real, that divine longing of God for man.

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

Can there be a single moment in which there is nothing wanting to the human spirit? Profound mysteries at once present themselves to the human soul by the mere

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

utterance of these words. We do not know, now, even how much is wanting to us, for no one has sounded the immense abyss of the human soul. The more we give to our nature, the more it desires, the greater is its hunger, the more it *wants*. The great void of our souls is like the space wherein roll those globes of light called stars. The greater the telescopic power for penetrating into the depth of space, the more planets are discovered. Even the depths of the heavens have not been sounded, and much less those of the human heart. Our Saint seems to have known the emptiness of the heart, for she knows how it can be filled, which is by possessing God. In order that nothing may be wanting to the heart, an object adequate to its capacity must be given to it. The heart is made in the image of the infinite, therefore it must be given to God, infinite being; then only will it want nothing, because forever and in all things it will be a profound, marvelous and consoling truth that,

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

## Chapter 9

*How we shall possess God in heaven.... He will satisfy the mind—the will—the heart—the senses.... Lift up your hearts.*

**I**N ORDER that God may satisfy all the cravings of human nature, and in such a way that man will be able to say in all truth that in possessing God he *wants nothing*, it is necessary that between God and man there exist a bond, intimate, perfect and eternal; so that man possesses God in a real, immediate, complete and absolute manner. This is reserved for *that life above which is the true life*.

In it, according to Catholic dogma, the soul will *hold* God in a perfect, absolute and eternal possession, because it will unite itself to Him intimately and in reality, loving Him without measure and knowing Him not in enigmas or through intermediate ideas, but by immediate and intuitive

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

vision. There the divine union on the part of man will be perfect and total, and his happiness complete and eternal. The blessed can well sing with the Carmelite poetess:

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

In heaven there will not be a single human faculty that will not experience a joyous satiety without weariness. Nothing will be wanting to the mind, for there will be the clear light of truth. Not a light such as in the world illumines the mind. This earthly light never manifests itself but through partial shadows; it enlarges the soul without ever being able to fill it, because it is a slender and limited light. But the heavenly light enjoyed by the blessed is full, perfect and inexhaustible, giving joy and satiety to the mind, without producing weariness of the spirit. Uncreated light, infinite, and author of all that exists. All luminous things participate in its splendor; it contains, or it is, the principal source of the two states, real and ideal; it is the lu-

## How We Shall Possess God

minous torch from whence all created minds receive their light, and it is the primary, efficient source that imparts being to all beings. It is the formal and adequate limit of all intelligences. It is the whole of uncreated truth, and, because it contains them as their source, represents all created truth. Therefore in this divine light are contained all possible truth. Therefore it is metaphysically impossible for the human mind to have obtained that divine light and not be completely satisfied. If in possessing all of the truth therein contained the immense craving of the created mind were not fully satisfied, it would be desiring something beyond the essential reason of truth, and this is absurd; as absurd as for the corporeal eyes to see the invisible, namely, that which has neither light nor color, nor the sense of touch to feel the intangible. No, *nothing will be wanting* to the mind, when in heaven it comes into the possession of God; eternally happy, it will bask in that immense sea of light, with

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

more freedom than the clouds and winds as they sail beneath the blue canopy of the firmament without ever going beyond its immense confines; neither will it be able even to desire it.

*Nothing will be wanting* to the will because the light of the intellect necessarily reflecting upon it, will cause happiness and perfect satiety. These two faculties having been created in order to guide one another, will walk in perfect harmony; the one cannot still be on its way if the other has already reached its destination. The intellect being eternally filled with ecstasy in the intuitive contemplation of the uncreated truth, the will also must of necessity be rapt in the ineffable enjoyment of the Beautiful Goodness.

In the same manner as the Divine Essence contains in itself all truth, it includes also all goodness, created and uncreated, because it is the essential goodness and efficient source of all goodness and beauty; and in the same manner as it satiates the



## How We Shall Possess God

mind with truth, it will also satisfy the will eternally by love of goodness and enjoyment of beauty.

St. Augustine spoke with great certainty in saying of heavenly Beatitude that "it is the enjoyment of truth: *Gaudium de veritate.*" (Confes., Bk. LX, chap. XXXIII.)

*Nothing will be wanting* there to the heart or any of the other sensitive faculties, whose functions complete man's perfection. The possession of God does not destroy nature, but, on the contrary, completes it. So therefore, besides those joys of a purely spiritual nature, belonging to the mind and to the will, there will exist in heaven all those corporeal functions, which, without involving any kind of imperfection, unite in completing human nature. Above all we shall not want in those delicate affections of holy love, that tenderness and refined sensibility, whose seat is the heart, and which frequently form the distinctive character and noble crown of the innocence of saintly souls.

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

Without doubt these sensible affections are not essential to blessedness, nor can they augment *intensively* the happiness of the Saints; but neither do they impede it. Material joys do not form an essential part of blessedness, but are its ultimate completion.

There are some orators and ascetics who are accustomed to represent heaven to us in such a purely spiritual and abstract manner, that it requires all the effort of assiduous meditation in order to desire it. When treating of heaven they can speak of nothing but God, infinite in goodness and beauty, surrounded by light, and holding the mind and will in perpetual ecstasy. Though the fancy, the heart and the senses are faculties not so noble as intelligence and will, yet they are not to be despised, nor considered as if they were to remain in a state of eternal slumber.

This way of looking at heaven may be very lofty, yet it little suffices to our actual mode of being. It is not enough to expose

## *How We Shall Possess God*

a truth; we must expose it whole and entire, and if possible (and it can always be done), we must in some way connect it with the heart, seeing that it must pass through this organ in order to be believed and at the same time put into practice. In the present case, the whole truth and conformable with all our most tender sentiments, is that when we shall fully come to possess God in heaven, in addition to the essential pleasure of the mind and will, we shall also experience the pure joys of the senses, and especially those whose source is the heart. This is the doctrine of St. Thomas, and after him, of all Christian theologians; and it is the only one that can satisfy all the yearnings and aspirations of the human soul.

“Who knows, then,” says Balmes, “but that the will, even after this life, will be surrounded by affections such as it now feels, well purified from the coarser part which come from its union here below, that oppresses the soul? There does not seem to be any intrinsic repugnance in this. And

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

if philosophical questions could be solved by sentiment, I would dare to conjecture that this mutual union of the faculties which we call *heart* does not remain in the grave, but takes flight with the soul to the immortal regions."

And Monsignor Bougaud beautifully expresses this truth: "If I live *in heaven*, why should not all my dear ones live there also? . . . I shall recognize them and perfect the life of friendship, love and pater-nity that *here* had only been shadowed forth. There I will give them amplitude. As a son, I will go back over the long line of my ancestors to their very beginning, and I shall recognize them all. As father, I will go back over that of my sons until the day when my race shall have become extinct, through my own fault or because God so wills it. I shall again find my friends and all those I have loved, and then I will love them truly. We will laugh together over what we then called love. Such is my absolute faith. . . . This life *that now we*

## How We Shall Possess God

*here enjoy, of the family, of friendship, love and society, will be that of the mind, perfected."*

He then gathers together the echoes of tradition and of the Holy Fathers, and from the times of Tertullian to those of Fenelon, proves that all great souls have professed these tender truths, and he is provoked at those *false* mystics, *who freeze the soul*, and whose foolish doctrines open yawning gulfs between the most noble instincts of the human heart and religion. (Bougaud, Christianity and Our Own Times.)

As to just when those joys of the senses shall begin in heaven, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, the Saints will not enjoy sensible delights until their souls shall have become reunited to their bodies after the general resurrection. Until then, eternal bliss will not attain its final completion. But at all events this great truth is ever certain, that sooner or later,

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

And *what kind* of function and sensible joys will there be in heaven? Leaving aside the extravagant opinions, there is no doubt but that there must be excluded from heaven all those sensible functions, and consequently their delights, which are intended exclusively to provide for the precise individual or specific needs of human life in this world. We will not have the use of food or drink, according to the teachings of the apostle. (Rom. xiv, 17, and I Cor. vi, 13.)

Let us conclude this picture with these beautiful words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in replying to the Sadducees when they insidiously asked Him if in heaven there would be certain pleasures, gave them this admirable lesson of chastity: "You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married; but they shall be as the angels of God in heaven." (Matt. xxii, 29, 30.)

## *How We Shall Possess God*

The heart, the fancy, the sight, the hearing and the touch, will not be in perpetual slumber, but in most perfect and sweet use. The perfection, harmony and beauty of their actions and the intensity of their joys we cannot even imagine. David, in contemplating the glory of heaven, in prophetic vision tells us that his soul remained absorbed in ecstasy, and in conclusion he adds: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." (Psalm lxxxiii, 3.)

So, according to Catholic doctrine, Beatitude is as perfect and faultless in heaven as it is fragrant with purity and replete with beauty. No imperfection shall be found in human nature there, nor does it forget the use of any legitimate faculty. Whatever of tenderness, of purity, of beauty and of the sublime that the human soul can conceive and desire is found there, raised to its highest degree of perfection and joy.

Do you wish to know, my soul, what you will enjoy when you come to possess God?

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

St. Paul saw and heard it, and he said that human language had not words to express it. Our Holy Mother St. Teresa saw and foretasted it, and when she tried to express the ineffable joys of the soul united to God in an eternal embrace, she could only falter through these beautiful lines:

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing,*

for therein lies the fulfilment of all that the most ardent soul can desire.

Oh! restless human heart, believe, hope and expand, as you gaze towards heaven, for high though your thoughts may soar, you will never be left wanting!

If you love and dream on earth, you will be very unhappy, because a predisposition to devotional tenderness is a forerunner credential of suffering. Look at all beautiful and tender souls and you will almost always find them tearful. For every friendship you will encounter a deception, for every illusion a disenchantment, for every favor ingratitude. Nearly every beautiful



## *How We Shall Possess God*

and sublime thought is in reality but an illusion, a dream that vanishes as soon as it comes in contact with the strong glare of prosaic reality.

But if you place your love and hope in heaven, you may enlarge the horizon of your hopes, even unto the infinite, because it is certain that whoever directs his thoughts towards heaven,

“As he hopes, so he obtains.”

Place then your faith, your hope and love in heaven, and heap together the dreams of your peaceful childhood, ardent youth, and others that have passed by with lightning speed, leaving through their contact a spark of holy inspiration; unite them to your most ardent desires of truth and *holy* tenderness, centuplicate all the fancies of the human soul, and as much as you are able to perceive of sublime, beautiful, tender and pure—yet you will find all and more than this complete in heaven, where nothing is wanting; because you will be

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

sweetly inebriated with the abundance of the house of God and you will drink of the torrents of divine delights.

For there you will possess God, who is the fountain of life, and in every case this rule holds true, in heaven and upon earth, in poetry and in dogma and in ascetics, that

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

## Chapter 10

*God alone sufficeth.*

*Why? . . . . How can harmony be established amongst  
our faculties? . . . . Dividing line between Catholicism  
and Rationalism . . . . The impotency of the latter . . . .  
A doctrine degrading to human dignity.*

*God alone sufficeth.*

is the last accent from the divinely inspired  
canticle of our Holy Mother St. Teresa.

It is a sigh of the exiled heart, whose  
sweet echoes constantly reverberate in all  
souls who meditate, in all breasts that feel,  
and in all hearts that love and hope.

It is a formula simple and clear, which  
summarizes all the longings of the soul and  
the ills of the human race, whilst one wan-  
ders far from his sweet homeland, heaven.

This thought is not an amplification of  
the former, it is its antithesis. The Saint,  
uplifted on the wings of faith, and held in

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

an ecstasy of lofty contemplation, knew practically that God of Himself, without help from anyone, could fill all the needs of the human heart in this world and satisfy the immense aspirations of our souls in the next. With the simplicity and tenderness of a virgin and the grace of an angel, she sang this great Christian dogma, saying:

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

But it was well to complete and illustrate further this consoling truth, by placing over against it the impotency of all other beings to satisfy the soul. It is not enough to comfort the heart, by telling it that in God it will find the fulfilment of all its desires. As God dwells so high above, and as it is always hard to raise the heart on high, it is necessary to undeceive it, and convince it that outside of God it will never be able to find perfect satisfaction. Our sublime Carmelite Doctor taught this second truth of the general impotency of all beings in order to satisfy the continual aspirations of

## God Alone Sufficeth

the soul, expressing it in this most beautiful phrase, which is a compendium of philosophy and history:

*God alone sufficeth.*

God of Himself is enough to constitute the perfect happiness of the human heart; but outside of God, nothing sufficeth it, nothing fills it.

It is satisfied neither with talents, riches, honors, pleasures, men, nor angels; there is nothing on earth in time, or in eternity, outside of God, that can pacify the spirit; because it is an indisputable truth of dogma, philosophy and history, that

*God alone sufficeth.*

He who has placed his thoughts, his heart and his confidence in God, has everything, whether in his place of exile or in heaven; for he possesses God, and it is also a very certain truth that

*Who hath God, wanteth nothing.*

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

For even though a single man could unite in his person in order to enjoy them—at the same time and for all eternity—the wisdom of Solomon, the glory of Cyrus, the victories of Alexander, the richness of Cræsus and the delights of Corinth, it would be as though he had nothing; for all human glory, the most refined pleasures, and all the opulence of the Orient, only entertain the heart; they will never satisfy it; and they soon become tedious and tiresome, because all the joys of creation are not adequate to the capacity of the rational soul, inasmuch as these joys must needs be limited and the aspirations of the soul are infinite. On this account the ingenuity of man, which tires itself in seeking means wherewith to pacify the human heart so that it may be happy on earth, will always find itself confronted by this imperishable truth:

*God alone sufficeth.*

A man may have at his disposal men with all their resources, the swords of generals,

## God Alone Sufficeth

the science of scholars, the genius of artists, the support of the great and the applause of the public; talents, fortunes and eloquence, cunning and all the gifts of nature; but if he has not God, he is nothing, he has nothing, he is worth nothing, he can do nothing; his glory will all fade into smoke; it will pass by like a shadow. The farthest his royal glory will ever reach, is the grave. There it will at last end, and sooner or later God will mock him and will crush his pride, humble his arrogance, and play with proud human might as the depths of the ocean sport with an empty shell, or as the tempests and hurricanes play with the fallen leaves of autumn.

And so the answer given to human arrogance by philosophy and history, individuals and nations, reason and sentiment, poetry, religion and genius, will ever be that

*God alone sufficeth.*

And why is God alone sufficient for man? Where is the reason of this dogma? It will

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

be found in the very depth of the human soul.

It is evident to all who even occasionally hold an interior conversation with self, that our being, our faculties and our activities and actions are out of balance.

Our strength is greater than our action. The strength of the desires we feel in regard to truth, and in the heart in regard to goodness and beauty, is infinite. The action of both faculties, which is nothing more than activity itself in action, is always limited, because action cannot extend itself beyond its source, which, like all created powers, is finite and limited. We want to know all of truth and love all that is lovable. In this regard our activity is infinite; it does not limit itself to any definite being, but it extends itself over all; and while it does not *understand everything*, and does not know the ultimate reason for all things, and does not possess them all, our hearts never rest.



## God Alone Sufficeth

But naturally we cannot understand by actual knowledge the whole of truth, for it is certain that we do not know more truths than those contained or expressed in an idea which we are actually studying or contemplating. We cannot say that which we do not actually think of, and we never think of ideas of a different nature at the same time. Our thoughts in regard to divers objects may be very rapid, but they are always successive. The understanding, then, privileged though it be, actually understands only such truths as are manifested to it through expressed ideas. But all ideas, on account of their very nature, are limited, finite. Therefore an idea will never be able to disclose to the understanding the *whole* truth, which is infinite. And, as on the other hand the heart or the will can never go beyond the rays of light that the intelligence sends them, the action of the will must also be always limited; it will never possess with the grasp of love more than a few well numbered objects. This cannot

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

satisfy it. Therefore, man *abandoned to his own strength* is condemned to ever desire infinite truth, boundless love and unlimited beauty without ever being able to either understand Truth, that is to say, the *whole* Truth, or possess infinite Goodness or contemplate essential Beauty. It glimpses more than it is able to see and understand, it desires more than it is able to obtain. Its activity or desires are unlimited. Its nature, its being, and consequently its action or activity, are limited. There is, then, disagreement between its desires and its actions; between its actions and its nature.

Here lies the why of the heart's anguish and the soul's restlessness in this world. In order to quiet them we must counterbalance our nature with our desires. We can well say of human nature what the illustrious Lacordaire has affirmed of all beings in general: "An action superior to its activity is impossible; and inferior action does not suffice for men; an action equal to their activity is the only thing that will set them at

## God Alone Sufficeth

rights with themselves and with the rest of the universe." (Conference on the *Interior Life of God*.)

And how can this beautiful harmony be established, how adjust immense desires or boundless activity, to a nature and actions essentially limited and finite?

We must *uplift* nature or the faculties, and consequently the power of action; or *lower* their desires of activity. In some way either nature and the faculties must be made infinite, or the desires finite. Behold the outline of the great problem—the torment and at the same time the comfort of the human spirit.

Here is the dividing line that separates naturalism or rationalism from Catholicism. The former wants to establish harmony in our being, by quenching all idea, all sentiment of the infinite; erasing all traces of God imprinted in our souls. It pretends to counterbalance this most distressful world of the human spirit, not by

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

raising what is less noble to what is most perfect and lofty; but on the contrary by lowering what is highest to what is less perfect, the spirit to matter. It takes away the infinite element, so that having, unlike the brute, more than material and coarse elements, tendencies and aspirations, we shall have in our soul a clear distinction between virtue and vice, between the temporal and eternal, between the aspirations and our effort to satisfy them.

To rationalists the infinite is but a foolish fancy; to think of it, desire it and love it, is a chronic disease of the human spirit. To cure it, rationalists hold that our heart must be restrained to the end that it may never think of anything beyond the confines of time and of matter. So that not thinking of God, nor desiring anything beyond the material and sensible, earth would suffice us; on it, they imagine, we would be contented and satisfied, live in complete peace, happiness and freedom.

But it will not be possible for rational-

## God Alone Sufficeth

ism to complete its work; it would be necessary to recast human nature and form it in another and an impossible mould. That divine *breath* of life which God infused into the first man and (at the moment of creating them) into each of our souls, naturally and spontaneously tends and returns to its source, God. It is the law of the spirit's gravitation that even unconsciously acts upon them, in the same manner as the law of universal gravity acts upon the molecules of bodies. Unbelief, systematic scepticism, the disorders of a vicious life, may for a time cause the desire for the infinite and the necessity of seeking God, to lie dormant; but to obliterate them—never. The serious disorders of life, the clamor of the passions, can neutralize the attraction of spirits towards God; sever it—never. Men are incredulous whilst they do not rightly think of themselves. They do not hear the promptings of their own hearts when they do not want to listen, because they are afraid of its intimate reproaches,

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

but sooner or later these will make themselves heard.

A great writer has said, that in order not to believe, for example, in the existence of the soul, such a great effort is required that the entire human race is incapable of making it, because "at the least distraction we find ourselves instinctively believing again in the soul." Great possible effort and attention are required *not* to desire, in any way, the infinite and eternal. If the rationalist's mind wanders from its efforts to disbelieve, it immediately thinks of God; and very easily does a prayer escape his lips when he suffers acute pain or serious loss. Then he unconsciously confesses he is wrong, or is ashamed of his bad logic. When some sudden inspiration of truth flashes through his mind, without giving him time to reflect that it would best suit his purpose to feign unbelief, he readily accepts it. If the sorrows and avowals that have escaped from the lips of the most marked rationalists and greatest enemies of

## God Alone Sufficeth

Catholicism were recorded, numberless volumes would be written. Through the clouds of their unbelief they catch a glimpse of something beyond; and in spite of themselves they love it, or at least they *would like* to have it—wishing to love it and feel it as others happier than they love and feel it. They are in an agony of soul, because they are deprived of the breath of supernatural life; and on this account the mind lingers in a never-ending death; because in that vague desire for the infinite which torments it, the soul is shown to be immortal. For it suffers in this world in which its adequate destiny does not exist, because it loves to possess the infinite, which is as natural to it as is its physical life. It is a great truth that in this world *man even by intuition prays and weeps*. (Lacordaire, *Letters to a Youth*, first letter.)

To all those men who persist in their unbelief, and in withdrawing from heaven try to be happy on earth, and in the same manner to those who believe,

*God alone can suffice.*

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

When they think they have already found enough light, warmth and beauty on earth, and that they have established (as they fancy) perfect harmony in the soul, obliterating all thoughts of heaven, then nature itself will take them in charge and give them the lie by causing restlessness; and when the paroxysms of unbelief have passed, their soul will cry out to them, as did the soul of the poet of Sorrento. *Light! more light!*

No; rationalism will never establish harmony in the human heart, because it can never find anything to make it happy, to suffice its longings.

Catholicism has solved this great problem in such a way, that it is only necessary to trace it in order to see its divine origin, for man is by nature incapable of fully conceiving such lofty things.

The Catholic solution is as opposed to that of rationalism, as truth to error, as light to darkness. It raises the nature and the faculties, and consequently the actions of man,



## God Alone Sufficeth

to the height of the desires or aspirations of his soul. Catholicism makes the faculties and actions in a certain way infinite, like our aspirations and desires; and it shows them their adequate objects. In this way harmony is established in the heart.

Rationalism pretends to harmonize by *lowering* what is most uplifting in man. Catholicism establishes it by *uplifting* all that was *lowest* in us.

Rationalism does not want the heart to desire or aspire, except to what it can acquire by its own powers. Catholicism uplifts man, ennobling his nature and faculties, so that our actions may be in proportion to the objects of the most noble aspirations of the soul.

The series of intimate relations which God establishes with man for this divine uplifting of our being, constitutes a group of august and adorable mysteries, whose study has exercised the most privileged spirits and ravished with sweetest consolations,

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

souls who have contemplated them with faith. For the present we may only lift a corner of the veil that covers them; and then we adore them with sincere faith until the day comes when we shall see clearly and distinctly all these marvels of the invisible world of grace.

## Chapter 11

*Sublimity of Catholic teaching.... Doctrine of grace  
.... The sons of God.... Their long infancy.... St.  
Paul's teaching.... How few reach their greatest  
spiritual age in this world.... In heaven alone, God  
will suffice for the complete  
happiness of all.*

**I**N ORDER to establish harmony in our heart, God Our Lord begins by *uplifting* or dignifying the nature of our souls by means of divine grace. Grace is a participation of divinity, a supernatural form given to us which, added to our soul, deifies and causes it to be born again to a certain divine life. By the infusion of the human form, which is the soul, we are born to human life; and by the infusion of sanctifying grace, which is a deific form, we are born to a supernatural and divine life.

This is the manner in which the profound meaning of the language of the Bible and of the Holy Fathers of the Church, is

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

understood when it calls those who are in the grace of God, *deific spirits and sons of God*. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that unless we are *born again of the Holy Ghost*, we shall not be saved (John iii, 5). St. John speaks of those who have *been born and preserve the seed of divinity, which renders them incapable of sin and makes them the sons of God* (I John iii, 9). And St. Peter says that God has bestowed upon us many graces, so that we may be made partakers of the divine nature (II Peter, i, 4).

The Holy Fathers, authentic interpreters of Revelation and of the divine mysteries, have had no difficulty in using a language in which they consider man raised to the honors of a participated divinity. "The Holy Ghost infuses a certain divine form in us, and the same Holy Spirit reforming us by sanctification, that is, through grace, the character of God and the Father shines forth in our souls." Such is the language of St. Cyril of Alexandria. No less conclusive

## Sublimity of Catholic Teaching

is the great St. Ambrose: "With reason did one say: We belong to His same race [God's], for He has made us His own lineage, so that we may seek that divine distinction that is not far from each one of us" (Epistle xliii, No. 10). The same doctrine was expounded by St. Leo the Great in this pathetic exclamation: "Recognize, O Christian! thy dignity. And having been made a participant of the divine nature, thou wilt not wish, by unworthy conduct, to return to thy former vileness" (Serm. 21, *In Nativ. Domini*).

And finally the Church, gathered together in the august assembly of Trent, placed the seal of infallibility on her teaching of these consoling truths (Sess. VI, Can. XI). She condemned the doctrine of Protestants who, set on lowering human nature, affirmed that God justified or raised man in a manner purely extrinsic, changing him intrinsically. If a prince raise a pauper to the dignity of adopted son, this favor of course does not change the man's real na-

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

ture. Fine raiment may be able to hide his defects; but in reality he will be the same as before, infirm and ignorant, if he was that way formerly. This is the way Luther and Calvin understood the grace of our divine elevation to the dignity of sons of God. The Church condemned this interpretation as false and heretical. Therefore grace changes and raises the very nature of our soul, changing it really and intrinsically, and, as it were, deifying it; she concedes to it a dignity and perfection in a certain way infinite.

Nature thus being dignified, it follows that the faculties should also be uplifted; for if the natural faculties emanate from the nature of the soul, so also from this second deific nature which through grace is added to the soul, flow divine faith, hope and charity and other supernatural gifts, which go to enlighten the understanding and sanctify the will, and to change both of these faculties intrinsically, raising them to a supernatural perfection, and making them

## *Sublimity of Catholic Teaching*

capable of courageous acts proportionate to the uncreated Truth and Goodness.

Thus begins the establishment of that coveted harmony of our infinite desires with our faculties; and hence the nature of the soul possesses also a certain infinity. Those who have been elevated in this manner practice certain acts that the rest of men cannot practice. Yes; with grace, that is to say, supernatural faith, hope and charity, we perform acts which exceed the natural capacity of man.

Christians believe truths which the rest of men cannot even conceive, considering them as the height of the absurd and the ridiculous; and this Catholic belief has been so intimate and sincere, that it has not only regulated all the customs of nations, but the faithful have joyfully sanctified it with the blood of eighteen millions of martyrs. Is this not supernatural? They have also loved with sweetest pleasure and greatest joy, those classes of men always contemptible to the rest of the human race

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

—the poor, the sick and the infirm. They have not only forgiven, but also loved their enemies; and in the midst of the world and the desert, in palace and in hut, in all climes and nations, and doing violence to their natural temperaments, they have practiced the two virtues most opposed to human nature; humility, the most profound and sincere, and chastity carried to its highest degree of virginal purity. Christians alone have done all this. If this is not supernatural, how is it that it cannot be practiced except by souls who willingly embrace the cross of Christ, who live beneath its shadow and who nourish themselves with its sap transmitted through the sacraments, which is the vivifying water of grace and of faith, hope and love?

I foresee the objection that will naturally occur to whoever reads the preceding lines. The majority of pious people do not seem raised to a supernatural order, for they often have the same or even greater defects than the rest of men, and they take little or



## Sublimity of Catholic Teaching

no care to practice charity, holy purity and the other virtues here distinguished as effects of grace.

This objection has no other merit than that of being very pretentious and as such, sophistical. Combine the terms and it will hardly deserve the honor of being answered.

For what is understood here by sons of God, that is, by men who are actually raised to a supernatural order? Not those who feign piety; not those who are Christians by conviction, but rather through conventionalism or other defective motive. Neither those who live habitually in mortal sin, although they preserve their baptismal name of Christian. These by sin *descend* from the high dignity of sons of God. They preserve neither the grace, hope nor charity that formerly raised them to a supernatural order. If they have any faith left, it must be a dead faith.

Of all these the true sons of God can say with St. John that they are with us, *but they are not of us* (I Epist. John ii, 19). The

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

objection then touches only the scant number of practical and sincere Christians, who preserve in their souls the divine gift of grace. That these, too, may have their weak points and even great falls that cause them to lose sanctifying grace, is not only a practical truth that is evident every day, but also a dogma of faith.

Whosoever would be scandalized at this would give proof of little knowledge of the human heart and of the matter under discussion; because the divine life in virtuous souls, while we are still in this world, does not reach its full development; it is, as it were, probationary; and in the meantime man is weak, like a child, in this stage of life, and he therefore too often falls many times and does not behave as a son of God, although he is so in reality. One must be patient with him, as a mother with her son, until he acquires strength enough to stand erect and walk alone.

*"My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you":*

## *Sublimity of Catholic Teaching*

that is, divine life of Christ (Gal. iv, 19). Such is the beautiful and tender expression of the Apostle of the Gentiles, which sums up all the great cares of the Catholic ministry of souls during the, at times, lengthy childhood of man in the life of faith, of grace and of charity. And whoever does not feel in his heart that strength of patience and warmth of faith and charity, necessary to co-operate in the spiritual and divine regeneration of souls and assist them in their infancy, is not suited for the Catholic apostolate.

Whilst man is a child in his physical life, he cannot perform all the physical actions of a man; in many he is not unlike the brute. While the Christian is a child in the divine life, he does not always act like a full-grown son of God; in many things he is not unlike the rest of men. It is enough for me to see that a child only once performs a manly deed, to convince me that he is now approaching adolescence; it is also enough for me to know that some men

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

have once performed deeds that are above human strength, to convince me that they are something more than men. The falls or weak points they may have, show me that they are still children in the divine life and not that they are bereft of it or have never had it. Those who, here on earth, have already become very strong in this divine life, do not fail; we call them *saints*, but saints are very scarce. The rest of us are only children in virtue, as it is supernatural virtue; and as children we are bound to stumble and fall; but our defects can scandalize only those who are yet themselves children in the science of the human heart and in the arcana of holy knowledge. For me, it is enough to know that there has existed on earth a St. Teresa of Jesus, a St. Vincent of Paul, a St. Francis of Assisi or a St. Francis de Sales and that there are many souls who in the secret of the home or the cloister, practice virtues that man of himself is incapable of performing. These souls are sufficient proof to convince me that

## Sublimity of Catholic Teaching

God sanctifies man, raises him above the ordinary strength and conditions of human nature.

As even supernatural life is not perfect in this world, neither is the equilibrium or harmony it must produce, always perceptible in human hearts. It is true that it is always greater than in the rest of men. Neither Sardanapalus, nor Augustus, nor any lover of earthly pleasures have been able to say with as much reason as the most persecuted of the apostles, in the midst of his imprisonments and trials: *I am filled with comfort: I exceedingly abound with joy* (II Cor. vii, 4). If there is a man in this world in whom fancy and reason, the intellect and the will, the heart and the senses, actions and duty and conscience, are in complete harmony, he is surely a son of God who lives in the shadow of the cross, and who nourishes his soul with the spiritual dew of heaven.

“No wonder it has been said that the heart of the believer is a continuous feast,

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

that it derives more joy from what it denies itself than the unbeliever from what he allows himself; that even tears of penance are a source of more joy than were the defects that gave rise to their being shed" (Coussette, *The Good Sense of Faith*, 2nd part, book 3, chap. 3rd).

But pure and believing hearts, even though they would not exchange their holy peace or inner joys, or a single portion of their pure happiness for all the pleasures of the world, are yet not satisfied; they aspire to an eternal peace and an infinite joy. To all those who live by faith and hope the apostle of love has said: *Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be* (I Epist. John iii, 2).

This completion of life will be in heaven, where the grace that has been infused in us here on earth will not only remain, but develop all its vital power within the faculties of the soul; in the will, where it will increase the supernatural form of charity,

## *Sublimity of Catholic Teaching*

which will then be free to unfold itself, without obstacles, in acts of the most intense love for infinite goodness and beauty; in the intellect, where the supernatural form of faith will be substituted by a divine *light of glory*, that will raise the human understanding to such high perfection, as to make it capable of seeing with intuitive and immediate vision the very essence of infinite truth, verifying what was so ecstatically sung by the Prophet-King (Psalm xxxv, 10): *In thy light we shall see light*. Without this supernatural, deifying and uplifting light, the understanding would never be able to know God rightly—the essential Truth Who contains in Himself all truth; he could have only some representation or image of God. But as every image or representation is limited by its very nature, the knowledge of God by means of ideas or images such as we have at present, although seen through the eyes of faith, is of necessity finite and limited. The understanding, knowing God in this manner, does not know

### *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

the *whole* truth, for it knows infinite truth under a finite form, which can in no way satisfy him.

As the heart, on the other hand, cannot extend itself in loving more than the understanding in knowing, therefore, while the knowledge of God is as yet imperfect, man will love Him under a conception that is also limited. Neither can such a love satisfy man's infinite aspirations towards goodness and beauty. In this way the lofty aspirations of our soul would be impotent, and equilibrium and harmony could never be eternally established in it.

But the human understanding, deified and strengthened by that supernatural light, becomes so uplifted, that (what before was impossible to it) *to know without enigmas or images the very essence of truth, becomes most easy and natural to it.* God immediately unites Himself in heaven to the human intellect, which sees in Him totally and perfectly the infinite truth and all cre-



## Sublimity of Catholic Teaching

ated truths whose knowledge it can possibly desire.

Thus, and only thus, by raising human nature unto the infinite, can that perfect equilibrium of mind be established, which Lacordaire says must exist between our action and activity, so that the heart may be happy and the cravings of the soul pacified. Our activity or our infinite desires will be able to reach their infinite objects, because infinite, in a certain way, will be the actions of our faculties dignified by the supernatural forms of the *light of glory* and of charity; and these same faculties will be able to be thus uplifted, because the essence of the soul from which they spring will be *regenerated and deified* by the divine form of sanctifying grace.

God alone can produce all this series of supernatural operations in our soul, because only He can bestow on us grace, the foundation of our happiness and greatness. God alone can grant the supernatural light, which strengthens the intellect. In God

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

alone can be found *all created and un-created truth*. Therefore only God can present it to the intellect; and as only by knowing the truth in this way can the human soul find rest, we shall conclude by uniting to the Canticle of our beloved Mother St. Teresa the testimony of Sacred Theology and Metaphysics.

It is very gratifying to our hearts to prove that these two sciences, the most noble the human soul can cultivate, demonstrate what our Mother taught when she sang, that in order to fill the immense capacity of the human heart,

*God alone sufficeth.*

## Chapter 12

*Confirmation of history and daily experience . . .  
Conclusion.*

OUR Holy Mother's Canticle could not lack the testimony of history and of daily experience which so beautifully expresses a truth of Catholic dogma, demonstrated by Theology and Metaphysics. For history also proves that in order to quiet the restlessness of the human soul only

*God alone sufficeth.*

A simple, angelic child of four summers, seated beneath a tree in the garden, whilst a tiny bird trilled forth his joyous song, was saying to her little brother who wept inconsolably for his sweet mother, who had just died: "Why do you cry so, my little brother? See, that little bird doesn't cry: hear how happily he sings!"

"The birds sing here," replied the sad little orphan, "because there is no other

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

heaven for them. We who are of heaven weep here on earth." (Marshall, *Hope for Those Who Weep*, chap. XIV.)

It would not be possible to express in more beautiful and simple form such a profound and consoling truth.

O Divine and Holy Catholic Religion! May you be forever blest! Because you cause to awaken, even in the hearts of infants, truths so sublime that neither the world's greatest scholars, nor geniuses who thought themselves inspired, could even glimpse them. You explain to us the cause of sorrow, you give us the reason for our constant restlessness, and you show us our eternal destinies. You are not comprehended by scholars who know not how to believe, but you are understood even by little children who know how to feel and love.

If the birds sing, it is because for them there is no other heaven but this earth of theirs; man has the exclusive privilege in

## Confirmation of History

this world to *think and weep*, because he is the only being who is a pilgrim, and the only one who has need of something nobler. Nothing on earth suffices him, because his destiny is higher.

All other beings of creation have reached *here* their proper destiny, and have been in possession of it from the first moment of their creation. The stars have as their proper sphere the circumference of their orbits; the birds, the regions of the air; the fish, the paths of the sea; the flowers and shrubs, their climates and seasons; and the wild beasts, their caves in the forests. They are in possession of their destinies, and for this reason they neither weep nor progress. Everything moves in concert and harmony in the universe. The human heart alone is in confusion and disorder; man is the only discordant note in this universal concert. All other beings enjoy themselves each in his own special way; they laugh and sing because they want nothing. Only man

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

weeps, sighs and suffers, because *nothing suffices him*.

Man is the most mysterious being of the universe. All other beings already possess their relative perfection, all are perfect in their order, that is, they are completely finished. Man alone, in spite of his pride, must recognize himself as imperfect. He is as yet in his infancy, in process of completion, according to the language of philosophers. He is imperfect in all his faculties, because he feels satisfied in none. He is an edifice partly begun. It is true that in his beginning he has already more absolute perfection than all other beings in creation, but what he has yet to acquire is much more; he is the most imperfect of all beings and yet the most perfectible of all. The most imperfect, because he does not feel satisfied in any of his faculties; the most perfectible because he will not content himself with less than the *whole* of truth and *all* of goodness; by paraphrasing one of Pascal's thoughts, man may be defined: A

## *Confirmation of History*

nonsense, an insignificant littleness just arisen out of nothing; he is even almost nothing; but he is going onward to unite himself to the infinite; whilst he does not reach the infinite, nothing can content him.

Nothing is sufficient to any of our faculties; none of them can fully enjoy here below their proper object. With our eyes we would love to contemplate the material beauty of the world in all its splendor and grandeur, and instead we must see the earth stained by blood and look upon the fetid wounds of the human race. With our ears we would love to hear infinite harmonies, and we are compelled to listen to moans, sobs and imprecations. Instead of the soft nectar so much dreamed of by poets, or that delicious manna that for the Israelites fell from heaven in the desert of Shin, we must partake of a most bitter bread, because it is kneaded with men's tears, sweat and blood. We have a terrible craving to see it all, to touch it all, to taste it all. We would love to travel over the world with

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

more speed than lightning, and rise through the air like the eagle, disputing the scepter with that haughty queen of space, and like her sit upon the clouds and rock upon the wings of the winds; but the body holds us captive on earth. The complaints of our soul, while contemplating the birds that traverse the regions of space, were aptly sung by a great Carmelite poetess in her romance of a little bird, "for one stanza of which," says Menendez Pelayo, "I would willingly exchange all the satires and epistles, idyls and Pindaric odes that were composed by the masters of her time."

\* \* \* \* \*

*Oh thou! light feathered songster  
Flitting through the skies,  
If thou canst, pray! higher rise  
And be my messenger;  
Of my trials a loving memorial  
Bear in thy rapid flight,  
To the inaccessible light  
Of the Sun of Justice eternal.*

\* \* \* \* \*



## *Confirmation of History*

We cannot even control the earth at our pleasure; so that we cannot easily explore her enormous mountains which rise to block our way; and the rivers and seas are often closed against our passage. It is true that after titanic efforts we have been able to pierce mountains with our tunnels, and we sail over the sea and rock upon her billows with almost as much security as if we slept upon a soft bed of flowers; but with all this we have yet much to do in the conquest of the world; and as regards space, after four thousand years of effort, and above all, after all our many discoveries, we have not satisfied our desires, but only enlarged them. The more we discover and invent, the greater becomes the restlessness of the human spirit. And now, the higher part of our souls is even less satisfied with created things, than are the senses. The intellect hungers after truth. We would like to know the essence and the why of all things; but truth even to the most privileged geniuses manifests itself only in fragments, and

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

by small degrees, as if it disdained to communicate itself to us.

Perhaps the heart is the faculty which feels itself most imperfect here on earth; it is the one that suffers most, the one that feels most acutely the weariness of exile. It wants to live a life of purity and of love, of beauty, confidence and friendship. It has been formed in a most delicate manner, in order to live a life of tenderness and of sentiment. But if there is a wanderer and exile in this world, it is the human heart of the truer kind. It is rarely understood, its affections hardly ever corresponded with, and too often it is despised and ridiculed. If it overcomes these obstacles, it stumbles against another one more to be feared, for it is easily sullied. Friendship is rare, and if at last it is found there is danger of its degenerating. The heart should surrender itself but to an angel, and angels do not live on earth.

If there is any human longing that nothing will satisfy, it is that of the human

## Confirmation of History

heart. The man who suffers most is the one who feels most. Even paganism recognized this truth; and, as it feared sorrow, it formulated this famous apothegm: *Unfortunate is he who loves*. A modern poet has sung in saddest accents: *It is a misfortune to love*. Let us mark these sentences, because they testify to undeniable truth, and are sad echoes of the heart's wailings in this world. If it does not love, it is dead; and if it loves, no matter what form the sentiment takes, its tenderness will be a burden that will torment it; nothing will satisfy it. Ancient philosophers, knowing the insatiability of the heart, determined to kill it, drowning its sentiments and proclaiming them weaknesses. This is the most convincing, practical proof that outside of God nothing will suffice the human heart.

The flower, in its way, is satisfied with the morning dew; the lambkin with the pasture where it grazes; the insect in joining with its monotonous song the entire concert of creation; inanimate beings also in

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

following the laws of universal gravitation and the cohesion of their parts. These all have what they covet and it satisfies them. Only man is always dissatisfied; he neither has all he desires, nor is he satisfied with what he has most ardently longed for when he obtains it. He wants to nourish himself with peace, love, light, truth and beauty, and will not be content with just any manner or degree of possession, but wishes to own them with an entire and eternal possession. Outside of God, all is limited and transitory. God alone is most perfect and unchangeable. God alone is eternal peace, boundless love, uncreated beauty, infinite light and truth. For this reason the heart that has wandered far from God, has always been and will always be restless.

Therefore history and experience, theology and metaphysics teach, in union with our Doctor of Avila, that

*God alone sufficeth.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## *Confirmation of History*

St. Teresa of Jesus, of angelic mind, seraphic heart and deific soul, approaching so near in her ecstatic contemplations the source of eternal truth, was able to know and feel the most sublime truths that the human mind can perceive in this world, and she summarized them in this short, little verse, which can provide matter for meditation through an eternity of ages for the most lofty intellects.

The royal eagle rising in flight through the air and gently swaying herself upon the clouds, where storms cannot reach, holds dominion over space above mountains and valleys, and, dwelling in peaceful contentment, is not affected by the raging elements below. So our Saint, the peerless eagle, rose on the wings of prayer and of genius above everything created; with her thoughts and heart she reposed on the very heart of God, as did St. John, the exile of Patmos. When she found herself in that inaccessible focus of light, she, like the apostle of the Gentiles, could affirm: "I heard secret words, which

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

it is not granted to man to utter" (II Cor. xii, 4).

Our Saint in the apotheosis of her glory, like all mothers, remembered her children and wished to instruct us so that we too might be able to rise to those heights, and in the form of a canticle she taught us all that any exile of heaven must know. Our Mother, from the heights of her lofty contemplation, saw clearly that in this long journey towards heaven, we would meet with immense trials, capable of bowing even the cedars of Libanus; and like a mother lulling her children in the cradle, with ineffable tenderness she instructs and encourages us, singing to us the sweetest, wisest and most profound canticle:

*Let nothing trouble thee,  
Let nothing affright thee,*

because all is in the hands of God who is our Father, and who with paternal providence watches over and protects us, if we place all our trust in Him.

## Confirmation of History

If you see virtue despised and vice cherished, truth ridiculed and error enthroned, and it seems to you that in heaven there is no longer any Providence for this world, remember that God makes no haste to apply the whole weight of His justice here below, because

*All things are passing,  
Only God is changeless.*

Virtue alone will be eternal, if we do not wilfully sever the holy tie that binds us to God.

Let not your *trials* discourage you, however great they may be; do not let them bow to the dust your mind made to contemplate heaven. With your heart and your trust placed in God, fight valiantly to the end, my children, without ever losing courage; because you depend upon God. Strengthen your heart with Him, for

*Patience gains all things.*

And if you deserve God's protection, you

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

will be happy on earth and in heaven, because in time and throughout eternity,

*Whosoever hath God wanteth nothing.*

Be not concerned about prosperity of any kind, nor heed in the least the favor of men, nor become troubled over their inconstancy; because there is nothing more certain or practical than this sublime truth:

*God alone sufficeth.*

Thus singing, our holy and beloved Mother united the most sublime as well as the most practical truths that on earth and in heaven man can ever know.



## Maxims

### *Of St. Teresa of Jesus for Her Religious*

1. Uncultivated land, although fertile, will produce thorns and thistles; so also man's intellect.

2. Speak well of all that is spiritual as well as of religious, priests and hermits.

3. Speak little when you are in company with many persons.

4. Observe great modesty in all your words and actions.

5. Never contend eagerly, especially in matters of little moment.

6. Speak to all persons with a well-regulated cheerfulness.

7. Never treat any one with contempt nor ridicule anything.

8. Never rebuke any one without discretion and humility, and a secret confusion at your own faults.

9. Accommodate yourself to the mood of those with whom you converse; be glad

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

with the joyful, and sad with the sorrowful—in a word, become all things to all, that so you may gain all.

10. Never speak without weighing your words well, and fervently recommending them to our Lord, that so you may say nothing to displease Him.

11. Never excuse yourself unless you have strong reasons for doing so.

12. Never mention anything concerning yourself which may redound to your praise, such as your knowledge, virtues, high birth, unless you have some reason to hope it may do good; and then mention it with humility, remembering that all these gifts come from the hand of God.

13. Never use exaggerated expressions; but give your opinion calmly and simply.

14. In every conversation endeavor to bring in some spiritual subject, for this may prevent idle words and detraction.

15. Never assert anything of which you are not quite certain.

16. Never intrude your opinion on any

## *Maxims*

matter unless it be asked, or unless charity require you to do so.

17. When any one speaks on spiritual subjects, listen to him with humility, and as a disciple to his master, and take to yourself whatever good he may impart.

18. Make known to your superior and confessor all your temptations, imperfections and difficulties, so that they may advise you and give you a remedy for overcoming them.

19. Do not remain out of your cell, nor leave it without a reason; and on leaving it ask of God the grace not to offend Him.

20. Never eat or drink but at the appointed time, and then give thanks to God.

21. Do everything as if you saw His Majesty present with you, for by this means a soul makes great progress.

22. Never speak evil or listen to evil of any one except yourself; and when you take pleasure in observing this rule, you will be making great progress.

23. Offer every action you perform to God, and pray that it may tend to His honor and glory.

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

24. When you are merry, refrain from immoderate laughter; and let your mirth be humble, modest, gentle and edifying.

25. Always consider yourself to be the servant of all, and behold Christ our Lord in all; and thus you will show them due respect and reverence.

26. Be ever ready to obey, as if Christ our Lord, in the person of your superior, had commanded you.

27. In every action, and at every hour, examine your conscience; and having observed your defects, endeavor to correct them by the Divine assistance: by this means you will soon attain perfection.

28. Take no notice of the faults of others, but only of their virtues, and observe your own defects.

29. Always cherish a strong desire of suffering for Christ in all things and on all occasions.

30. Every day make frequent oblations of yourself to God, and that with great fervor, and an earnest desire to possess Him.

31. Place before you throughout the day

## *Maxims*

the subject of your morning's meditation, and use great diligence in this respect, for it will be of great benefit to you.

32. Guard carefully the sentiments with which our Lord may inspire you, and put into practice the desires He gives you during prayer.

33. Shun singularity as much as possible, for it does great harm in a community.

34. Often read the constitutions and rules of your Order, and observe them faithfully.

35. In all created things consider the providence and wisdom of God, and praise Him in them all.

36. Detach your heart from everything; seek God and you will find Him.

37. Never display outwardly, devotion that you have not inwardly; but you may well hide your indevotion.

38. Let not your inward devotion be visible except in great necessity. "My secret to myself," said St. Francis and St. Bernard.

39. Never complain of the food, whether it be well or badly prepared, remembering the gall and vinegar of Jesus Christ.

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

40. Speak to no one at table, nor lift up your eyes to look at any one.

41. Consider the heavenly banquet and its food, which is God, and the guests, who are the angels: raise your eyes to that table, and desire to sit down at it.

42. In presence of your superior (in whom you behold Christ Himself), never speak except what is necessary, and that with great reverence.

43. Never, without real necessity, do things privately that you cannot perform in the presence of all.

44. Make no comparisons between persons, for comparisons are odious.

45. When you are reprehended for anything, receive the reproof with interior and exterior humility, and pray to God for the person from whom you have received it.

46. When one superior gives you a command, do not say that another commands the contrary, but reflect that they both have holy ends in view.

47. Be not curious to discover secrets; ask not questions about things that do not concern you.

## *Maxims*

48. Cease not to bewail your past life and your present tepidity, and your unfitness for heaven; so that you may live in fear, which will bring great good to your soul.

49. Always do what those with whom you live desire of you, if it be not contrary to obedience, and answer them at all times with humility and sweetness.

50. Ask for nothing peculiar in diet and apparel except upon some urgent necessity.

51. Never cease to humble and mortify yourself in all things until death.

52. Acquire the habit of making frequent acts of love, for they inflame and soften the soul.

53. Exercise yourself in acts of all other virtues.

54. Offer all things to the Eternal Father, in union with the merits of His Son, Jesus Christ.

55. Be gentle to all, and to yourself severe.

56. On the festivals of the Saints, meditate on their virtues, and beg God to endow you with them.

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

57. Be very exact every night in the examination of your conscience.

58. On the day you communicate, let the subject of your prayer be, that so miserable a sinner as yourself be allowed to receive God. And let your prayer at night be a thanksgiving for having received Him.

59. When you are superioress, never rebuke any one in anger, but wait till it is passed; and thus the rebuke will be fruitful of good.

60. Strive earnestly to acquire perfection and devotion, and do all that you have to do devoutly and perfectly.

61. Exercise yourself diligently in the fear of the Lord, which keeps the soul in compunction and humility.

62. Consider well how quickly men change, and how little reason we have to trust them: adhere, therefore, closely to God, Who is unchangeable.

63. Endeavor to trust concerning the affairs of your soul with a confessor who is spiritual and learned, and follow his counsels in all things.



## *Maxims*

64. Whenever you communicate, beg some gifts of God, through the great mercy whereby He is pleased to come into your poor soul.

65. Though you may have many Saints for your advocates, address your requests particularly to St. Joseph, for his power is very great with God.

66. In time of sorrow and trouble do not omit your customary good works of prayer and penance; because the devil tries to disturb you so that you will abandon them: but rather increase them, and you will see how soon the Lord will relieve you.

67. Do not communicate your temptations and imperfections to those who have made little progress towards perfection, because you will harm both yourself and them; but only disclose them to the more perfect.

68. Remember that you have only one soul; that you can die but once; that you have but one short life; that there is but one glory, and that eternal; and this thought will detach you from many things.

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

69. Let your desire be to see God, your fear lest you lose Him, your sorrow that you do not enjoy Him, your joy in that which may bring you to Him; and thus shall you live in great peace.

# Poems

COMPOSED BY

Saint Teresa of Jesus



## ST. TERESA'S BOOK-MARK

*Nada te turbe*

Let naught disturb thee;  
Naught fright thee ever;  
All things are passing;  
God changeth never.  
Patience e'er conquers;  
With God for thine own  
Thou nothing dost lack—  
He sufficeth alone!

## 'Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

### SELF-OBLATION

*Vuestro soy, para Vos naçi*

Lord, I am Thine, for I was born for Thee!  
Reveal what is it Thou dost ask of me.

O sovereign Lord, of majesty supreme!  
O Wisdom, that existed from all time!  
O Bounty, showing pity on my soul!  
God, one sole Being, merciful, sublime,  
Behold this basest of created things,  
As thus, with hardihood its love it sings,  
And tell me, Lord, what Thou dost ask of me!

Lo, I am Thine! Thou hast created me:  
And I am Thine, Thou has redeemed me:  
And I am Thine, for Thou dost bear with me,  
And Thine, for Thou hast callèd me to Thee,  
And Thine, Who dost preserve me at Thy cost  
Nor leavest me to perish 'mid the lost—  
Say what it is, Lord, Thou dost will of me.

Declare what dost decree, O Master kind!  
If serf so vile have any fitting task,  
And tell what office by Thy will ordained  
Is work that from so base a slave dost ask!  
Behold, sweet Love, I wait for Thy command,  
Behold me, Lord, before Whose face I stand!  
Do Thou reveal what Thou dost will of me!

Behold my heart, which here I bring, and in  
Thine hand as glad entire free-offering lay,  
Together with my body, life, and soul,  
The love, the longings that my being sway!  
To Thee, Redeemer and most gentle Spouse,  
In willing holocaust I pledge my vows,  
What is there, Lord, that I may do for Thee?

## Poems

Bestow long life, or straightway bid me die;  
Let health be mine, or pain and sickness send,  
With honour or dishonour; be my path  
Beset by war, or peaceful till the end.  
My strength or weakness be as Thou shalt choose,  
For naught Thou asketh shall I e'er refuse,—  
I only wish what Thou wilt have of me.

Assign me riches, keep in poverty,  
And let me cherished or neglected dwell,  
In joy or mourning as Thou wilt, upraised  
To highest heaven, or hurlèd down to hell!  
Whether the sky be bright, from cloudlets free,  
It matters not—I leave the choice to Thee,  
What lot, O Lord, wilt Thou decide for me?

Give contemplation, if Thou wilt, or let  
My lonely soul in dryness ever pine;  
Abundance and devotion be the gift  
Thou choosest, or a sterile soul be mine!  
O Majesty supreme, in naught apart  
From Thy decree can I find peace of heart!  
Say what it is, Lord, Thou dost wish of me!

Lord, give me wisdom, or, if love demand,  
Leave me in ignorance; it matters naught  
If mine be years of plenty, or beset  
With famine direful and with parching drought!  
Be darkness over all or daylight clear,  
Despatch me hither, keep me stationed here,  
Say what it is, Lord, Thou wilt have of me!

If Thou shouldst destine me for happiness,  
For Love's sake, joy and happiness I greet;  
Bid me endure and labour till I die,  
Resigned, in work and pain my death I'll meet,

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

Reveal the how, the where, the when; for this  
Is the sole boon, O Love, I crave of Thee,  
That Thou declare what Thou wouldst have of me!

Let Calvary or Thabor be my fate,  
A desert or a fertile land of rest;  
Like Job, in sorrow let me mourning weep,  
Or lie, like John, in peace upon Thy breast;  
Bear fruit and flourish, or, a withered vine  
I'll perish fruitless, so the choice be Thine!  
Reveal, O Lord, what Thou dost ask of me!

Like Joseph as he lay in shackles bound,  
Or holding over Egypt first command;  
David chastised, atoning for his sins,  
Or David crowned as ruler o'er the land;  
With Jonas struggling, 'mid the raging sea  
Submerged, or set from ills and tempests free—  
Declare, O Lord, what Thou wilt have of me!

Then bid me speak or bid me silence keep,  
Make me a fecund or a barren land;  
Expose my wounds by the stern Law's decree  
Or comfort me by Gospel message bland.  
Let me in torture lie or comfort give,  
I crave alone that Thou within me live,  
And shouldst reveal what Thou wilt have of me!

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### DIVINE BEAUTY

*O hermosura que excedeis!*

O Beauty, that doth far transcend  
All other beauty! Thou dost deign,  
Without a wound, our hearts to pain—  
Without a pang, our wills to bend  
To hold all love for creatures vain.



## Poems

O mystic love-knot, that dost bind  
Two beings of such diverse kind!  
How canst Thou, then, e'er severed be?  
For bound, such strength we gain from Thee,  
We take for joys the griefs we find!

Things void of being linked, unite  
With that great Beauty Infinite:  
Thou fill'st my soul, which hungers still:  
Thou lov'st where men can find but ill:  
Our naught grows precious by Thy might!

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### THE SOUL'S DETACHMENT

*Lleva el pensamiento*

Keep thy thought and ev'ry wish  
Ever raised to heaven on high;  
Let no trouble thee oppress,  
Naught destroy tranquillity.  
Follow with a valiant heart  
Jesus, in the narrow way;  
Come what will, whate'er thy trials,  
Let naught ever thee dismay.

All the glory of this world  
Is but vain and empty show;  
Swiftly all things pass away,  
Naught is stable here below.  
Be thy sole desire to win  
Good divine that never wanes;  
True and rich in promises,  
God our Lord unchanged remains.

## *Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

Love what best deserves thy love—  
Goodness, Bounty infinite—  
Lacking patience, love can ne'er  
Reach full purity and height.  
Confidence and living faith  
In the strife the soul maintain;  
He who hopes and who believes  
All things in the end shall gain.

Though the wrath of hell aroused  
Hard the hunted soul besets,  
He who to his God adheres  
Mocks at all the devil's threats.  
Though disgrace and crosses come,  
Though his plans should end in naught,  
He whose God his treasure is  
Ne'er shall stand in need of aught.  
Go, false pleasures of the world!  
Go, vain riches that entice!  
Though the soul should forfeit all,  
God alone would all-suffice!

---

### SELF-SURRENDER

*Dichoso el corazon enamorado*

How blessed is the heart with love fast bound  
On God, the centre of its every thought!  
Renouncing all created things as naught,  
In Him its glory and its joy are found.  
Even from self its cares are now set free;  
T'wards God alone its aims, its actions tend—  
Joyful and swift it journeys to its end  
O'er the wild waves of life's tempestuous sea!

## Poems

“SOUL, THOU MUST SEEK THYSELF IN  
ME, AND SEEK FOR ME IN THEE”

*Alma, buscarte has en mí*

Such is the power of love, O soul,  
To paint thee in My heart,  
No craftsman with such art,  
Whate'er his skill might be, could there  
Thine image thus impart!  
'Twas love that gave thee life:  
Then, Fairest, if thou be  
Lost to thyself, thou'lt see  
Thy portrait in My bosom stamped:  
Soul, seek thyself in Me!

Wouldst find thy form within My heart  
If there thou madest quest,  
And with such life invest,  
Thou wouldst rejoice to find thee thus  
Engraven in My breast.  
Or if, perchance, art ignorant  
Where thou mayst light on Me,  
Wander not wide and free,  
Soul, if My presence wouldst attain,  
Seek in thyself for Me!

Because in thee I find My house of rest,  
My dwelling-place, My home,  
Where at all hours I come  
And knock at the closed portal of thy thoughts  
When far abroad they roam.  
No need is there to look for Me without,  
Nor far in search to flee;  
Promptly I come to thee;  
If thou but call to Me it doth suffice—  
Seek in thyself for Me!

## Saint Teresa's Book-Mark

### AD CHRISTUM

O Thou my sovereign Spouse! To Thee  
I come. Ah, grant me to attain,  
Nor let me wander far in vain,  
That in the depths of Thy vast sea  
This streamlet may its end obtain!

O gentle Spouse! Aid with Thy grace,  
And with the palm my soul invest  
That's due to love's subservient quest,  
That in its Bridegroom's fond embrace  
My soul may find its perfect rest!

Thine arms for me will vict'ry get,  
Nor to entreat such boon I shrink,  
Knowing that Thou wilt never think  
How little *Thou* dost owe—and yet  
How deeply *I* am in Thy debt!

Lord, by Thy nuptial contract bide,  
Detach my soul from alien ties  
And make it sure of Paradise,  
Since Thou with arms outstretched wide  
Art waiting to receive Thy bride.

Since Thou dost thus Thine arms extend  
I'll give my soul to be their prey,  
And while Thou drawest it away,  
Thine eyes, my Christ, upon me bend,  
Whose soul dost from my body rend!

While I to Thee my soul confide,  
Let Thy five wounds my comfort be  
To which my soul finds passage free,  
For they as heaven's portals bide  
Which, for my sake, were opened wide.

## Poems

Thy guests are of such noble sort  
I know not if my lowly state  
Gives entrance, so beside the gate,  
A lowly woman, do I wait,  
Apart from those that form Thy court!

My life in such a sort is led,  
Obedient to the laws Love made,  
That all my hopes on Thee are stayed,  
While hangs to plead in my poor stead  
This *Agnus Dei* by my bed.

Care not that I am indigent,  
But look upon my soul as Thine,  
And say if certain hope be mine!  
Ah yes! I see Thy head is bent  
To bow me token of assent!

At length the time has come to see  
How far our love doth lead in truth,  
And if we love in very sooth,  
For now I come to shelter me  
Beneath the branches of this tree.

Since this is so, my Spouse, my King!  
Though surging tumult round me rage,  
Let Thy command my dread assuage,  
While to these wood cross-bars I cling,  
That He they hold defence may bring!

I do not fear the anguish rife  
In that last parting's bitter sting  
If unto Thee, my Christ, I cling,  
For in that hour of final strife  
I hold within my clasped hands—Life.

*Saint Teresa's Book-Mark*

For if I clasp Thee, Lord, behold  
Then doth our mutual delight  
My soul with Thee, O Christ, unite,  
Since God within mine arms I hold  
Who in His arms doth me enfold!

## Prayer of St. Teresa

O my God! since Thou art charity and love itself, perfect this virtue in me, that its ardour may consume all the dregs of self-love. May I hold Thee as my sole Treasure and my one glory, far dearer than all creatures. Make me love myself in Thee, for Thee, and by Thee, and my neighbour, for Thy sake, in the same manner, bearing his burdens as I wish him to bear mine. Let me care for naught beside Thee, except in so far as it will lead me to Thee. May I rejoice in Thy perfect love for me, and in the eternal love borne for Thee by the angels and saints in heaven, where the veil is lifted and they see Thee face to face. Grant that I may exult because the just, who know Thee by faith in this life, count Thee as their highest good, the centre and the end of their affections. I long that sinners and the imperfect may do the same, and with the aid of Thy grace I crave to help them.













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